ALBERT;

OR, THE

WILDS OF STRATHNAVER.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

LOUISA, OR THE COTTAGE ON THE MOOR; DUNCAN AND PEGGY, PENITENTS OF GODSTOW, ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES, ST. MARGARET'S CAVE, MODERN TIMES, FARMER OF INGLEWOOD FOREST, PILGRIM OF THE CROSS, &c. &c.

"Amid the roses fierce Repentance rears
Her snaky crest; a quick returning pang
Shoots through the conscious heart, where honour still,
And great design, against the oppressive load
Of luxury, by fits impatient, heave."

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ALBERT.

CHAPTER I.

A Confession and a Peace-offering.

ALBERT, on his return, informed his uncle that he thought the estate delightfully situated, and very improvable, but wished him to ride over the ensuing morning, before he made any resolutions respecting it.

"I shall not do any such thing, sir. What do you think I wished to seek you out for, but to take all such trouble off my hands? for, in faith, all is come out since you went! You, sir, provoked the

secret out of me, but Marian gained it, I do not know how; the gypsy softened my heart until she might have wound me round her finger."

Albert and his sister congratulated each other, while Mrs. Stanhope congratulated both.

"Well, I am glad to see you love one another," said the colonel; "and, heark'ye, Albert—ride over to-morrow, and make this purchase, as our good friend, I understand, had rather decline it. Let me see how soon you can get it ready for my reception, for I shall expect to dine with you there in the course of a month."

"Dine with me, sir?" said Albert.

"Yes, sir, dine with you. What a plague, shall you begrudge me a dinner? Nay, never stare, man; that estate shall be yours. I will make you independent, on purpose to see how you will behave. Besides, to confess the truth, you are not so much obliged to me as you may think. I suspected you plaguily of keeping a

wench,

wench, and incurring a debt on her account; but Marian, through her friend's persuasion, has set me right, and this is but a peace-offering. To be sure, I shall expect you, in return, to be plagued with me as much as I choose. No reply, sir; it shall be as I say, and this good girl will be our housekeeper, until either she or you get married."

Marian stole a look at Mrs. Stanhope that bespoke regret, which she returned with one of equal expression, though softened with a smile. Neither escaped Albert—"My dear sir," said he, "Mrs. Stanhope has honoured my sister by being pleased with her company. Marian, under her protection, has not only been contented, but happy; I am therefore convinced you will not, on second thoughts, wish them to separate."

"No, on my faith!" returned the colonel, warmly. "If Mrs. Stanhope wishes to retain her, well and good; she was her friend when she had no other, and we

ought never to forget it. Besides," added he, bowing to Mrs. Stanhope, "if you condescend to keep my niece, we shall have a good excuse to intrude the more frequently."

"Not more frequently than welcome," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "I think I may venture to say; but though I confess I shall feel the loss of Miss Montgomery's company, yet it would be unjust to deprive you of her, whose claim is so much stronger."

"Can there be a stronger claim than gratitude?" answered Albert.

"Egad, I think not, madam!" replied the colonel, "and am therefore resolved to attach this fellow to me."

"My dear sir," answered Albert, "deeds will more effectually speak for me than words; I must therefore refer you to them, for I have not language to express the feelings you give rise to."

"Thou hast been a dutiful son and a good brother, and therefore I have little doubt

doubt thou wilt as worthily fulfil the other claims that may be made upon thee. For the present, we must, if possible, persuade this Mrs. Mosely to manage for us; but I shall insist, when once we are settled, that you look out for a wife. Our good friend here can perhaps assist your search. I would take one of her recommendation against the world."

"Indeed," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "it is an office of all others I would wish to decline. Mr. Montgomery's own heart will be the best and only director. I have too good an opinion of him to think he will ever fix it imprudently."

"There may be some justice in that," said the colonel, "but I hate your long tedious courtships. I am sixty-three, madam, and life is uncertain; besides, you must allow it would be devilish ungrateful to let me slip out of the world without the satisfaction of seeing an heir, particularly when I have set my mind on it."

"In that case," answered Mrs. Stanhope,

 laughing,

laughing, "I know not what to say; but your health appears good, colonel, and your father lived to a great age; it is therefore probable you may do the same."

"Eighty-nine, madam; but even in that case it would be very comfortable to see a great-nephew or two grow up as mettled dogs as their father. Oh! how I should glory in them, if they fenced as well——"

Albert jogged his uncle's elbow.

"Zounds, be quiet!" continued he, aside; "it is only a slip; I will mend it in a minute. Yes, madam, the rogue fenced himself into my good opinion; we had a hard-fought battle of words, but the dog parried all my hits, and at length disarmed me, as you see."

Towards night the gentlemen offered to retire to an inn; but Mrs. Stanhope insisted to the contrary, not at all to the dislike of Albert, and much to the satisfaction of the colonel.

When Mrs. Stanhope found herself alone with Marian, before they retired to rest, the occurrences

occurrences of the day were revived with pleasure, both however agreeing that the colonel was bound to secrecy on some particular subject, and on which, in all probability, it would be in vain to question Albert.

The fears of Marian rested at once on Berners—a supposition in which Mrs. Stanhope could hardly acquiesce—"However," said she, "I will, to-morrow morning, carelessly ask your brother whether he has seen my nephew, or his abominable companion, since we left London; he will not tell a falsehood, and we may form our conjectures from his answers. If any thing has happened, it cannot be of a very serious nature, by the cheerfulness of both uncle and nephew."

This supposition was too rational for Marian not to accord with it, and the conversation immediately turned on the letter which the colonel had entrusted with Mrs. Stanhope.

"It will," said Marian, "be no breach

 of

of promise to my uncle (for he required none) to suffer me, my dear madam, to be present at the perusal, and would confer on me the highest gratification, though I should not like to make the request to him."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Stanhope, "I rather suspected that you would wish it, and for that very reason would have declined reading it. Come, exert yourself; let us banish the subject, and restore the letter unopened to the colonel."

"No, madam," answered Marian; "I must request—nay entreat, you will peruse it; it will make you somewhat acquainted with my excellent parent; but, if you think me unequal to the task, I will acquiesce, though, I confess, unwillingly."

"To refuse you, my love," replied she, "is painful, and to comply is equally so."

"Trust me, madam, this time," said Marian, "and if I fail, you will know in future what reliance is to be placed on my word. I shall undoubtedly feel as a daughter; but I shall also feel, that the parent

whom

whom I lament is enjoying the recompence of her virtues—a reflection that shall dry my tears and sooth my sorrow."

"I will trust you," answered Mrs. Stanhope, "but not to-night; we will both read it in the morning. The presence of your uncle, whom we must meet at breakfast, will oblige us to recall our spirits, for it would be cruel to damp his pleasure."

Marian submitted to this arrangement with a sigh, wished her friend a good-night, and retired to her chamber.

CHAPTER II.

A Letter.

However anxious Marian was to hear the adjuration that had made so deep an impression on her uncle, yet she did not intrude on Mrs. Stanhope until her usual hour, when she found her risen and dressed, and, from some faint traces of tears that hung on her cheek, guessed how she had been employed—"My dear girl," said she, "I am not unmindful of my word. Read the letter; I will retire while you peruse it, but shall return in half an hour, when I expect to find *you* not unmindful of the promise you made me last night."

With these words, Mrs. Stanhope laid the

the letter and her watch on the table, tenderly saluted her, and left the room.

Marian, though she had attained her wishes, for some moments remained irresolute; but sinking on her knees, at length took the letter, pressed it repeatedly to her lips, and with a trembling hand unfolded it, and read as follows:—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"Confined to the gloomy solemnity of a deathbed, and hastening towards that awful and dispassionate hour when the vanities of life sink as nothing before us, and pride flies like an empty shadow—after a silence of more than thirty years, your long-forgotten sister calls on you—calls to awaken sleeping nature in your heart, and demands it to fulfil those duties that properly devolve on you. Ah, Maurice! how came my dearest friend your most abhorred enemy? or how is it possible you should hate the tender guardian

and beloved husband of your Marian?—Ah! that friend, that husband is no more! in that country he finds peace, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Yes, I live to relate that he has pressed before me to the grave; but again shall we be united, and soon the same kindly dust cover both. So far shall *we* then be safe; but while beaten about by the tempest of life, I, miser-like, am anxious for my treasure, and, no longer able to grasp it, would transfer it to those to whom I was once dear.

"An uncorrupted youth and maid, with minds virtuous and untainted as their father's, and hearts susceptible as their mother's, claim from your care the protection of an uncle, the soothing of a friend, and the affection of a parent.—Taught to depend on themselves, and to be satisfied with little, they need only the kind advice of riper years, to direct their youth in the perplexing road they must necessarily pass, before they are sufficiently

ficiently acquainted with the world to be aware of its dangers. Refuse me not then —reject not my dying prayer, as your soul shall answer to mine, in the great and tremendous day, when all hearts shall be laid open! Step forth—protect my children, and a blessing more powerful than mine will rest upon you—the blessing promised to the protector of the orphan and fatherless.

"Ah, Maurice, could we meet once more!—but that wish is vain—you would grant my request, and accept the charge with pleasure, as it would enable you to repay the long arrears of affection you owe me. To what, my brother, have you sacrificed the happiness of years?—To family pride. Has it requited you? has it repaid you for the many pleasurable hours it has deprived you of?—Surely not. It has left your heart a void to a sister, and to a brother, who, had you properly known him, would have been the first friend of your affection.

"To

"To sir James Montgomery I shall make no appeal. My Albert's children shall not stoop to so harsh and unfeeling a man; though I have no doubt but that same family pride, which in the first instance made us foes, would in this step forth with ostentatious humanity, to save them from being necessitated to act in any manner derogatory to his vanity. But they shall not gratify it by such a submission. If all other means fail, the interest of the small sum they possess, and the humble seat of their parents, will afford them bread and an asylum.

"I have little more to add, than to pray that Heaven may continue its protection to you; for you have surely been uncommonly fortunate in escaping any serious casualty, surrounded as you have been with all the hateful turmoils of war. You have gained promotion, rank, and fortune; but let not these make you regardless of the approaching hour which all must meet, when all shall vanish as a dream,

a dream, and virtue alone afford us comfort.

"My pen lingers on the paper. This is the last letter I ever shall trace; and the hand which writes it will probably, before this meets your eye, be food for worms, or mouldering in the dust.

"If ever any uneasy thoughts should arise in consequence of the coldness that has subsisted between us, I conjure you, let this idea banish them—I have been among the most blest of womankind; the only shade upon my happiness, the displeasure of my family. Riches and poverty kept from us at equal distance—we neither wished the one, nor feared the other; our affection increased with years; and, to complete all, in our children we had the satisfaction to contemplate, that the virtues we endeavoured to inculcate were not cast on an ungrateful soil.

"Wearied and exhausted, though the labour of many days, I must relinquish this task—I must bid my brother a last

farewell.

farewell. My heart whispers me he will not be unmindful of my request—a thought that smooths my passage to the grave. Adieu, my Maurice! blessings attend you! Guard my children, and the deed shall revert on your own head.

"Adieu! adieu!

"MARIAN MONTGOMERY.

"*Queen's Row, Brompton.*"

This letter was not perused by Marian without many breaks, and having frequent recourse to her handkerchief, to clear the dimness that obscured her sight. At length her promise to Mrs. Stanhope occurred; and casting her eyes on the watch, she perceived that three quarters had elapsed since she left her; when, struggling with her sorrow, she folded the letter, rose from her knees, and wiped off the intruding tears, exclaiming—"Ah! how true is the word of the psalmist, that Heaven is never regardless to the prayer of

of the righteous, nor doth the reward of their virtues ever fail to be transmitted to their children!"

Another quarter of an hour elapsed before Mrs. Stanhope joined her, when she found her calm, resigned, and ready to accompany her to breakfast.—"My dear madam," said she, pressing the letter to her lips before she returned it, "how shall I express my thanks for your thus gratifying my curiosity? I will candidly confess it has cost me some tears; but they are not painful, for they are such as soften the heart and amend it."

"I rejoice to find your behaviour in this case even superior to my expectation," said Mrs. Stanhope; "in future I shall in no case fear to trust you."

Thus speaking, she led the way to the breakfast-room, where they found the colonel and Albert waiting their appearance.

CHAP-

CHAPTER III.

Charitable Opinions—A Purchase.

The compliments of the morning past, and breakfast nearly finished, Mrs. Stanhope, addressing Albert, said—"Mr. Montgomery, have you seen either my nephew or Berners since we left London? On Frederic's account I am sincerely uneasy, as his youth, and unhappy predilection for that bad man, will, I fear, draw him into many serious calamities."

The colonel chuckled, as he had no doubt the restraint laid on him must now inevitably be removed.

"I saw both, madam, by chance at a coffee-house," answered Albert, "a few days

days before I left town; they were then apparently well."

"My nephew, I hope, is sensible of his error?"

"I hope he is—I am convinced he is rather misled, than naturally inclined to evil. Pardon me, madam, for presuming to advise—some tempers are impatient of control—your gentle interference might perhaps shew him his danger, and snatch him from the pernicious sway that Berners apparently has over him, and which you can scarcely wonder at, when you reflect, that early impressions are not easily shaken off, and that the power of a beloved preceptor has scarcely less influence over the mind than that of a parent."

"There is not such a fellow in the world—egad, there is not!" exclaimed the colonel, involuntarily.

"I know not what measures to adopt," returned Mrs. Stanhope, without appearing to notice the colonel's exclamation—

"I grieve

"I grieve to leave him in his errors, yet almost fear he is incorrigible."

"Pardon me, madam, for differing in that respect from you," said Marian: "Mr. St. Austyn has no appearance of libertinism in his general manner; and had he not been ashamed of his conduct, he never would have made the offer by a second person. That odious man, no doubt, planned the whole; for Mr. St. Austyn never could ask *him* to execute such a commission."

"Your opinion is however charitable," said Mrs. Stanhope. "But, to banish an ungrateful subject, it is a fine morning, colonel—what say you to a ride over to Blackwood?"

The colonel acquiesced, and the coach was ordered, in which Mrs. Stanhope and Marian, with the gentlemen, soon reached the intended purchase; which entirely meeting the colonel's approbation, an agreement was made previous to the sale, and drafts given for the money.

All

All were now busied in arrangements for settling the colonel and his nephew in their new habitation; which was completed within the colonel's given time of one month.

CHAPTER IV.

Soliloquy—Conversation—Imprudence—and a weak Endeavour to act uprightly.

Mrs. St. Austyn appeared somewhat recovered after being a month in the country; but Frederic, in a great measure left to his own reflections, and shrinking from the scrutiny, determined at that period to return to London. Gertrude too was by no means at ease. Some time before, Berners' absence was the only thing that disturbed

turbed her (or at least that she fancied disturbed her); but now she was in reality uneasy, not only on her mother's account, but on her own. The promise given to Berners hung on her spirits; for, though it was nothing more than what a thousand beautiful *persecuted* damsels had done before, yet it was inconsistent with that spirit of rectitude which nature had implanted in her breast; and the idea of concealment from her nearest friends appeared a mark of ingratitude from which her heart recoiled.

"Yet," said she, as she reflected on the subject, "why should I be uneasy? Have I not long preferred Berners to every other man in the world, and, if I do not marry him, am resolved never to marry any one? Then why should the promise vex me? Berners, I am convinced, loves me, and the many years I have known him may surely excuse my having so much confidence in him. Yet," continued she, after a pause, "has not my mother also loved me?

me? How many years duty are due to her! and yet I have taken a step of such consequence without consulting her. Ah! should I ever have a daughter, how should I despise her if she were capable of such duplicity! I dare not reflect on the subject. Let what will be the consequence, I will disclose all to Frederic. He, I am sure, respects Berners, and will advise me for the best."

Thus resolved, the first time she found herself alone with her brother, she prefaced the subject by expressing her surprise that Berners had not accompanied him into the country.

Frederic readily replied, that his friend had complained of the coldness with which Mrs. St. Austyn had behaved, and on that account declined it.

"Indeed," replied Gertrude, "my mother did not treat him quite so kindly as usual; but he should consider that her health was at that time very indifferent; and

and if he had not even chosen to come here, he might have been at his father's."

"True," answered Frederic; "but I fancy the country has no charms equal to those he meets in London. Berners is naturally gay, and the sameness of domestic life is not calculated to please him."

Gertrude felt an uneasy qualm about her heart; but assuming all her courage, she said—"Perhaps he may have formed some attachment in London. I think I heard a vague account of his being in love with Miss Montgomery, and that in consequence Mrs. Stanhope had taken a dislike to him."

Frederic, in his turn, felt confused; but somewhat relieved, by finding that the real case was unknown, he replied—"I believe you could scarcely have fixed upon a woman he loves so little, though he acknowledges her handsome and accomplished. Indeed, I believe he is ra-

ther

ther a general lover than a particular one."

"Surely you judge wrong: he appears to possess too much sensibility to be a general lover."

Frederic laughed—"My dear Gertrude, that romantic disposition thou hast imbibed will be perpetually leading thee into errors. Berners is the man for whom I have the most affection; but I hope he will never marry, for I do not think he would be happy in that state himself, or make a deserving woman so."

Gertrude, however wounded by this speech, rejoiced that she had not disclosed her secret, and resolved to conceal it more carefully than before—"I think," said she, after a short pause, "you made an offer of assistance to the Montgomeries? at least, if they did not choose to accept it, their behaviour was unpardonable."

Frederic was now convinced that his sister had heard an erroneous account of the affair, yet fearful of saying any thing that might render an explanation neces-

 sary,

sary, he answered—"It was a foolish business, and originated in error on both sides. I mistook their character, and they misunderstood my real intentions; I could therefore wish it forgotten."

"Mr. Berners, I am sure," answered Gertrude, "can never forget it. Mr. Montgomery's behaviour to him was beyond every thing derogatory."

"As Berners knew there was a misunderstanding, it had been better could he have sufficiently mastered his temper to let him pass unnoticed," returned Frederic.

"Doubtless it might; but Mr. Berners is high-spirited, and for haughtiness, I never saw Montgomery's equal—at least to judge from his manner that morning in the park. If he is so insufferably proud in adversity, what would he be in prosperity?"

"Most probably the contrary," returned Frederic. "He is my greatest enemy; yet I must do him the justice to declare, that

that I believe him a noble generous fellow."

This answer astonished Gertrude, who, perplexed in conjecture, wished for further information; but Frederic, resolved on the contrary, abruptly left her—"Why," said he, when alone, "am I forced to esteem the people that hate and despise me? By Gertrude's vague conjectures, it is plain this unhappy business has never been explained either to my mother or her. Generous Marian! to Mrs. Stanhope I have no doubt she was forced, from Berners' conduct, to declare all: but how truly delicate not to expose me to my sister! and how equally generous of my aunt not to lessen me in my mother's opinion!—Ah! perhaps it is not yet too late to regain their esteem: but to give up Berners, who has suffered so severely, and entirely through his mistaken friendship for me, is impossible, and every effort without that I know would be unavailing."

A month, as before said, had elapsed,

 when

when Frederic, tired with the country, and yet more so with himself, determined to return to town, which Berners' letters had never failed to press. Mrs. St. Austin was also better; and now, within six months of being of age, he considered himself as competent to act as he pleased, as if he had been really so.

Frederic had not been in London many days before he was convinced that Berners had some female pursuit that he had not confided to him, and with a little attention discovered that his landlady's daughter, Betsey Southern, had been unfortunate enough to please him. He had spoken warmly of her the first time he saw her, but that Frederic had placed to the usual effervescence of his manner; but now, whenever the parties met, which was not unfrequent, as Betsey was entirely at home, attention on the side of Berners, and blushes on that of the young woman, soon revealed the truth.

"I wish," said Frederic, half jestingly,

ly, "that girl had not returned while we were here."

"Pshaw! you are grown the merest cynic—a very dog in a manger! Is she not a charming creature, and formed to be beloved?"

"Indeed," answered Frederic, "though I did not observe her the day her mother was ill, yet now I must confess she appears the picture of innocence and beauty."

"Oh!" exclaimed Berners, "'tis the prettiest simpleton nature ever formed—so mild, so unassuming, so ready to believe; in short, so much to my taste, that I never loved a girl so well in my life."

"You intend to marry her then?" said Frederic.

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Berners. "To be sure, I have been obliged to say something of that kind to quiet her fears, and gain time; but what think you was my answer? Marian thought herself under no obligation for such an offer—nay, if she had accepted it, she would have made you feel she was doing you a favour. Such

haughty minxes ought to be humbled; but to shew you the difference, the sweet girl almost thanked me, and replied timidly, that she was not worthy to be the wife of such a gentleman; but that if she were raised, as I had condescended to mention, she hoped she should never forget her origin, nor the conduct necessary to make it overlooked by others."

"On my soul," exclaimed Frederic, "you have a heart of stone, if you seduce this girl!"

"I should have one of adamant, if I did not endeavour to vanquish her prejudices, and make her happy," replied Berners.

"Perhaps your mode of happiness may not fall in with her idea."

"Never doubt it," returned Berners; "I shall find a docile scholar, I warrant you, for she has already set aside paternal duty, and listened to me in secret, and I have somewhere read, that one false step as naturally begets another as a father does a son. Our first interviews were procured

procured with some difficulty, for I watched her out and pursued her; but the two last have been by her own consent, and our meeting-place the Park, for the old woman is as watchful as a lynx: it is impossible to converse with her at home."

After Berners' departure, Frederic could not avoid ruminating on the subject, and the upright part of his character for a while predominant, he determined, if possible, to save the imprudent girl from the ruin that awaited her.

In the course of the ensuing morning, as he was walking with Berners, a small ready-furnished house in a pleasant situation attracted their attention, and Frederic, anxious to remove Berners from Knightsbridge, immediately proposed hiring it. Berners, however attached to Betsey, made no objection, for the new habitation being more centrically situated for pleasure, he could not withstand the temptation; or perhaps considered, that as she had before met him secretly, he could in

future but have recourse to the same means.

The morning before Frederic left Knightsbridge, calling in the parlour to discharge his lodging, Berners being not yet risen, he found Mrs. Southern and her daughter alone. On bidding them farewell, he respectfully saluted Betsey, saying, in a manner sufficiently strong to be understood by the young lady—"I take this liberty, Miss Southern, in the presence of your mother, and permit me to add, that when you meet with a man happy enough to gain your heart, and your mother's approbation, I shall think myself honoured by presenting your hand to him at the altar. That you may not forget this request, I entreat you to accept this trifle as a memorial."

So saying, he presented her a ring of some value, and withdrawing from the mother's thanks, hastened up stairs, called Berners, and entering a coach, they soon arrived at their new habitation.

Frederic's spirits yet continued depressed;

ed; but convinced that there was an insuperable bar between himself and Marian, he determined to drive her from his heart and memory, and therefore plunged into all Berners' dissipation. He played deep, without any real inclination to gaming, and as he was no adept, always with loss. He also kept a mistress, whose name was fashionable in the annals of gallantry; but though handsome and universally followed, she frequently inspired him with disgust, when recollection forced him to compare her free and loose behaviour with the frank yet chaste manners of Marian. To complete all, he would have drank, for wine appeared to him the most powerful soporific; but constitution in that case was at enmity with inclination, for excess of wine disordered and deranged him so greatly, for some days after, that it only afforded more leisure for painful remembrances. Amidst all, he was not unmindful of one object. The skill of Albert in the use of arms touched him nearly, and

determined in future not to be outdone in the noble heart of *man-killing*, he daily practised at a mark, and also engaged a skilful fencing-master to instruct him in that science.

In this state was the infatuated Frederic, erring against his better judgment, and daily approaching nearer the gulph which must finally overwhelm him, when he arrived at the age of twenty-one. His debts, together with the money he had raised, he found serious drawbacks on his estate; but he was now a professed man of pleasure, and had not time for such paltry considerations. Marian too, though sometimes she cost him a sigh, was less remembered than formerly, for his company, sought by the dissipated among the men, and his person, admired and caressed by the imprudent among the females, he became more reconciled to himself, and almost wondered how it was possible *she* could withstand him.

CHAP-

[library stamp]

CHAPTER V.

A respectable Exit.

In the meanwhile the time passed more pleasantly, as well as respectably, at Blackwood. The colonel, though petulant, possessed an excellent heart, and anxious to pay to the children the debt of affection he owed the parents, was daily giving them fresh proofs of his esteem. To Mrs. Mosely Marian had written in her uncle's name, offering her any sum that might be necessary to assist her in business, or, if she approved it better, a comfortable asylum at Blackwood; the latter of which she had chosen, entreating time only to settle her sister in the business their kindness enabled her to decline.

One afternoon, as Mrs. Stanhope and

Marian were preparing to accompany Albert to Blackwood, the arrival of the following letter, express, gave a damp to their pleasure, and determined Mrs. Stanhope upon a longer journey.

"MADAM,

"By order of my mistress, I take the liberty to request you to favour her with your presence as speedily as possible. She has never been well since she came from London, though she would not suffer Miss St. Austyn to inform you of it, lest, as she says, it should alarm you; but to-day the breaking of a blood-vessel has not only given us, but herself, the most serious apprehensions, and her greatest anxiety appears to be to see you. Miss St. Austyn never leaves her a moment, and indeed is almost incapable of writing, or would not have intrusted the task to,

"MADAM,

"Your obedient humble servant,

"SUSANNAH ROCHE.

"P. S.

"P. S.—This same express has letters for Mr. St. Austyn."

"I dreaded this event," said Mrs. Stanhope, when she read the above to her friends; "my sister's health was always delicate, and, accustomed to the regularity of a country life, it has been unable to bear the town air, added to late hours and fatigue. I shall set off immediately. Heaven send I may be of any service! You, my dear," turning to Marian, "shall remain with your brother and uncle, as the journey must be far from agreeable."

"If I can be of any service, madam," returned Marian, "command me. If the journey be unpleasant, a companion will be the more necessary."

Mrs. Stanhope declined this offer; she wished to spare her sister the mortification of meeting one whom she had unmeritedly insulted, and which must inevitably

ably have been the case when she found her family and connexions equal to her own.

Mrs. Stanhope travelled with the utmost speed; and though she had the satisfaction to find her sister living, yet not a gleam of hope remained of her recovery. For the first time for many years her heart appeared sensible of sisterly affection; and as Mrs. Stanhope tenderly embraced her, she said, faintly—"Alas! I remember all my errors towards you, but shall not live to make atonement for them. Be a friend to my poor Gertrude: I have left her in your power, and shall die content if you accept the charge."

"Would I could accept it on a less melancholy occasion, my dear sister!" answered Mrs. Stanhope; "but rest assured, should there be a necessity for it, that I will not only regard Gertrude as a sacred trust, but also as my own child."

A faint smile enlivened Mrs. St. Aus-

tyn's features; and after a short pause, she added—"I shall not enjoy the satisfaction of seeing my son."

"Where is Frederic then?" answered Mrs. Stanhope, hastily turning to Gertrude, who was weeping by her mother's side. "Is it possible that he is not yet arrived?"

"The express returned last night," said Gertrude. "Unfortunately my brother was not in town, nor is he expected for a fortnight. His orders to his servants were, to keep all letters carefully till his return, unless he sent for them. Did he know my mother's situation, I am convinced he would fly to her."

Mrs. Stanhope made no reply, but bestowed all her cares on her dying sister. But neither tenderness nor attention was availing, for on the following morning she expired.

The first shock somewhat recovered, Mrs. Stanhope gave every necessary order, and causing Mrs. St. Austyn's will to be read,

read, lest there should be any particular charge, found it merely concerned Gertrude, who was left to her guardianship, with a fortune of sixteen thousand pounds, if she married with her aunt's concurrence, but otherwise it was left at her discretion.

The funeral over, Mrs. Stanhope truly judged, that remaining on the spot where Gertrude had experienced so severe a loss could but increase her grief; therefore, causing all to be prepared, they left the mansion-house the morning after the interment, and nine days from her arrival.

In the meanwhile, Mr. St. Austyn's servant, aware of the necessity of his master being apprised of his mother's danger, spared no pains to discover where his engagement lay, and at length learned he was with a party at Newmarket, where he immediately joined him.

Frederic, on perusing the letter that informed him of her danger, for a moment remained silent; then turning to the ser-

vant,

vant, he said—"Use all possible haste in procuring posthorses; I wish not to delay a moment."

"By Heavens!" said Berners, who was alone with him when the servant left the room, "fortune is surely disposed to recompense you for her former frowns; for, should Mrs. St. Austyn's jointure fall in, it will be a good acquisition to the estate."

"Perish so selfish a thought!" replied Frederic, warmly. "I could wish you, Berners, to remember that Mrs. St. Austyn is my mother; and I candidly confess, that I take shame to myself when I consider my errors towards her."

"On my life, an admirable speech for a pupil of Montgomery!" replied Berners; "but for one of mine, it will never do. Nature before dissimulation has ever been my maxim."

"Dissimulation, sir!" repeated Frederic.

"Pshaw! what signifies the mere word? I am vexed to see you grieved in such a

cause.

cause. How is it possible you can care for a woman who has given such repeated proofs that self-gratification was her highest enjoyment? Obligation and affection beget esteem; but you owe neither to her."

"Yes," answered Frederic; "the care of my infancy, and the insuperable obligation that a son owes to a mother."

"Insuperable obligation!" repeated Berners, laughing; "I protest I cannot discover it. Pray, did she bring you into the world solely for your own advantage? or was you summoned as an unthought-of, an unconcerned being? But keep to your present frame of mind, and I predict you will die a parson."

"I hope, however I live, that I shall not die a scoundrel," answered Frederic, with petulance.

Berners replied with equal heat; but in his passion happening to touch on the sorrow he experienced from the weight of his obligations, Frederic's heart melted at once, and a reconciliation took place; a

few

few minutes after which, the chaise being ready, they departed.

Frederic's spirits appeared too much oppressed for Berners to hazard another quarrel; and the journey, during two whole nights and one day, was performed without much conversation on either side. Berners could not avoid congratulating himself on the step he had taken in respect to Gertrude, while Frederic was undergoing a scrutiny from his own conscience, which he could neither stifle nor silence.

At length they reached the manor-house; all was dreary and silent, and Frederic's fears already whispered he was too late. The porter opened the gate.—"How is my mother?" exclaimed he, regardless of his being in mourning.

The old man hung down his head in silence, and without uttering a word the question was answered.

"Where is my sister?" continued he, leaping from the chaise: "let her know

I am

I am here. Would to Heaven I had been sooner!"

"Miss St. Austyn, sir," answered the porter, "is gone with Mrs. Stanhope; they left the house not more than four hours ago. The expresses surely have miscarried, for two have been sent to London with the news of my mistress's death."

"I was not in London," replied he, rushing into the house, and running wildly from room to room, at least expecting to find his mother's corse: but every thing was in its usual state of order—no vestiges of death or funeral pomp were to be seen. At length, throwing himself on a sofa, he wept bitterly. Somewhat recovered by tears, and gratified that he could indulge his propensity without ridicule (for Berners had left him when he entered the house), he sent for the old butler, and, after questioning him when his mother died, demanded an account of all that had passed.

"Why, an' please your honour, both Mrs.

Mrs. Stanhope and you were sent to as soon as we apprehended danger. She came directly, but your honour was——"

"Where honour had no business—— But go on as concisely as possible. When did Mrs. Stanhope come? who was with her? and what did she say on finding me absent?"

"She came, your honour, the evening before my mistress died. Poor lady! she was fatigued almost to death with travelling post, yet she would not leave her all night."

"She, at least, has the satisfaction of knowing she did her duty. But proceed; what did she say respecting me?"

"Nothing, your honour, before the ladies, as my mistress's maid, Roche, told us: but she soon after came down, and sent off her own man to London to endeavour to find you; but he returned, and said——"

"I care not what *he* said—I was not to be

be found. But go on, my friend; I am sorry to be so hasty; I asked before who was with Mrs. Stanhope?"

"Nobody, please your honour, but old John and Thomas, and the young woman that is lately come to live with her."

"Well, well—she here too! A curse attend the projectors of that infernal jaunt, that kept me away at such a time! But how were Mrs. Stanhope and my sister at their departure? Miss Montgomery, I am convinced, would spare no attention to comfort them."

"Who, sir?" said the man, staring.

"Who! Why, the lady that came with Mrs. Stanhope—a young handsome lady—Miss Montgomery."

"Lauk, sir, I did not know her surname. To be sure, Mrs. Jenny is a very smart young woman; and if it was not for the cast in her eye, and her being pock-fretten——"

Frederic had no longer patience. "Fool! "idiot!"

idiot!" exclaimed he, "and have you been so long keeping me in suspense about a paltry wench whom I never saw?"

"Merciful goodness! how passionate your honour is with your old servant! How should I know whom you expected?"

"True, true, good Jonathan! I am indeed strangely altered. Would I had died in lieu of my mother!"

"God forbid! Your honour will, I hope, live to see many happy days. You must not give way to grief. You have not yet asked respecting my mistress's will."

"I have not yet thought on the subject," replied Frederic. "If she has taken care of Gertrude, I am satisfied; I was amply provided for."

"Your honour's, to be sure, is a good estate, and Miss Gertrude's fortune is very handsome. Sixteen thousand pounds may match such a lady to one of the best men in the kingdom."

"Heaven

"Heaven send so large a sum does not rather make her a mark for some of the worst to aim at!"

"Pretty safe, your honour, for that. Mrs. Stanhope is left her guardian, and that fortune in case she marries with her approbation; if otherwise, it is left to *her* discretion."

"Is it possible that my mother made so excellent a restriction? Mrs. Stanhope, I am convinced, will never refuse her consent to a deserving object, however small his fortune; and her approbation being necessary, will keep off the worthless."

Frederic, after some further conversation, desired Jonathan to have all the bills collected in the course of a day or two, as he would then discharge them.

"Bless your honour, 'tis all done. Mrs. Stanhope was up this morning at six, and paid every shilling. I took the liberty of an old servant, to say your honour would be here soon, and she need not trouble herself; but she answered, it was all the same,

same, it could be settled between you. She gave every servant in the house ten guineas to buy mourning, and black coats and gowns to every aged person in the village who had not above ten pounds yearly."

"Leave me, good Jonathan; I shall be more myself presently; I will try to compose my spirits."

Jonathan bowed, and left him.

"So," said Frederic, dejectedly, "this last circumstance has completed all! Well do I know Mrs. Stanhope's disposition, and perfectly understand how I stand in her esteem by this settlement. I neglected my mother living, and she is resolved that her poor remains shall not accept any thing from such a son. Nothing now can ever reinstate me in her opinion. And can I wonder? It is not impossible but that she has learned where I have been, and that while the parent that gave me birth was languishing in the agonies of death, I was expending my estate in riot,

 with

with gamesters whom I despised, and women who inspired me with disgust."

Berners, who had only left St. Austyn until he supposed the first gust of sorrow would be evaporated, now entered; and as he was particularly careful in his expressions, Frederic felt relieved by his society. Conversing on the death of his mother, Berners, who with the utmost difficulty had so long restrained his curiosity, at length asked whether she had made a will, and settled Miss St. Austyn's fortune?

"She has acted respecting Gertrude," replied Frederic, "just as I could wish; *she*, at least, never failed in her duty to her: she has left her sixteen thousand pounds."

"Sixteen thousand pounds!" answered Berners, almost thrown off his guard by the agreeable surprise the sound occasioned—"Sixteen thousand pounds did you say? How I rejoice the amiable Miss St. Austyn will be independent! She

doubtless

doubtless will not remain long with your aunt, to be perhaps accounted secondary to Montgomery's sister."

"Gertrude, I am convinced, will never be secondary to any one in her aunt's esteem, unless it be her own fault. But I forgot to tell you of a clause in my mother's will, that has astonished me, as it infers more reflection than she usually shewed."

Berners' spirits felt somewhat lowered; he feared he knew not what; but assuming a careless air, and turning towards the window, he asked what the clause might be?

"It is," returned Frederic, "that Mrs. Stanhope's consent is necessary to her marriage; without which she forfeits all but what depends on her generosity, or rather prudence, to give."

It was fortunate that Berners had turned his face from St. Austyn, or, adept as he was, his features must have betrayed him. Gnashing his teeth with vexation and

 disappoint-

disappointment, he inwardly muttered a curse, and remained silent.

"You do not speak," continued Frederic: "do you not think it a prudent restriction? Gertrude's education has been erroneous and romantic, and might have rendered her an easy prey to a designing villain."

Berners turned hastily round: he almost supposed that his design was discovered, and that Frederic had taken this method to let him know it. St. Austyn's features were, however, too calm for his suspicions to continue, and overcoming his emotion, he replied—"Prudent restriction do you call it? I think it unjust, tyrannical, and unpardonable. Is that the reward for her attention? To render her dependent on the caprice of a woman whom living she herself could not endure, and who, in all probability, will throw her away on her favourite Albert."

"Indeed," answered St. Austyn, "your dislike to that family makes you unjust.

Mrs.

Mrs. Stanhope's prudence or generosity was never, I believe, called in question. My mother, I readily agree, feared her; but the reason was obvious—she was a rigid censor of her little foibles; but this last calm and dispassionate act plainly evinces how high an opinion she had of her prudence."

Berners ventured no reply; he felt to restrain his temper would be impossible, and therefore changed the subject, by saying he would, in the course of the evening, call at the Rectory to see his father, if Frederic would accompany him.

St. Austyn declined the invitation, and after Berners' departure wrote to Gertrude, to whom he expressed the sorrow and anxiety he had experienced at being absent at so awful a moment. He then spoke in the highest terms of his satisfaction respecting the arrangement concerning herself, adding, that when his spirits would support a scrutiny, whatever jewels or trinkets appertained to his mother, he

 would

would remit to her; concluding by desiring her to entreat Mrs. Stanhope to draw on his banker for the sums she had disbursed, as he would prepare him to answer them by the first post.

CHAPTER VI.

Concealment painful to a grateful Mind.

Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude came immediately to London, as the former determined to settle every thing relative to her niece before she returned home; and finding the house she had before occupied free, she engaged it for a month.

Mrs. Stanhope had always treated her niece with affection; but her behaviour now was softened into a tenderness such as Gertrude had never before experienced: for,

for, though doubtless Mrs. St. Austyn had loved her equally, yet her temper was naturally petulant, and her treatment of Gertrude rather as a *child* than a friend and companion. It has been before observed that Mrs. St. Austyn was avaricious—her daughter's pocket-money consequently had not been ample; and when Mrs. Stanhope informed her that she should pay her one hundred pounds per quarter, she could not help exclaiming—"What, my dear madam, shall I do with so much money? Indeed it is a great deal more than I can possibly expend."

"I think not," returned Mrs. Stanhope, smiling, "when I inform you what I expect you to do with it. In the first place, you shall purchase your clothes, as by that means you will exercise your own taste; in the second, you must pay your own servant, as that step will give you a more decided authority over her than if she received her money from a third person. These necessary articles fulfilled, I have

no doubt you will find a use for the remainder, which, if you cannot dispose of otherwise, give it to the needy. Your fortune, with the addition I may choose to make to it, will be too considerable to render paltry restrictions necessary, and to disperse our superfluities I think not only a duty, but a pleasure."

Gertrude's heart was naturally grateful; and, melted into tears by her aunt's kindness, she exclaimed, as she pressed her hand to her lips—"Ah, madam, may I never forfeit your affection!"

"I have such trust in the innate rectitude of your mind, my dear Gertrude, that I think it impossible: and now we are on the subject, let us properly understand each other. The power your mother gave me I reflect on with pleasure, as it convinces me that she esteemed me; and if there was a coldness between us, it must solely be attributed to the difference of our dispositions, and the want of properly conciliating her on my part. So far then,

then, my love, it gives me pleasure, but no further. If I have no claim on your affections, I will have none by compulsion. Whenever you meet a worthy respectable man whom you can love, be assured of my acquiescence; and though I should certainly prefer his possessing some fortune, observe I do not make it absolutely necessary, so he is what I could entrust with the happiness of my niece."

What a moment for Gertrude! Her secret was almost on her lips, but a sudden recollection convinced her that Berners was by some means so low in her aunt's estimation, that she did not dare venture the discovery. Yet resolved, if possible, to learn the real case (for Berners' account, and what had passed between herself and Frederic on the subject, did not appear to accord), she said, after expressing her gratitude—"Yet, madam, amidst the satisfaction I experience from your kindness, I have one unhappiness—Frederic, I am convinced, labours under

your displeasure. His absence at my mother's death I hope you will not deem unpardonable; he was by no means aware how ill she was, any more than yourself, or doubtless would never have taken a journey without leaving proper orders with his servants."

"Of this last piece of imprudence I shall say little, as I have no doubt, if he has any feeling remaining, it will carry its punishment with it. I am sorry, my dear Gertrude, he will not let me esteem him. I have already told him on what condition our friendship might continue; it is the dismissal of Berners that I demand; for never can I call that person my friend who is in league with so vile a character."

Gertrude was too much affected to make any reply. She knew that some distaste had arisen in Mrs. Stanhope's breast against Berners, but had no idea it was so determined a resentment. At length, however, she mustered courage to say hesitatingly—"I am grieved—Frederic's partiality to

Mr.

Mr. Berners has long been fixed—his care of his youth—my father and mother highly respected him."

"Because they did not know him, Gertrude; nor should I, but from his own imprudent behaviour to Montgomery in the Park. I insisted on being informed of the cause, which Marian with some difficulty complied with, and I then learned that he had been despicable enough to call upon her after seeing her once here, and make her an offer of a settlement from your brother, doubtless supposing her poverty would oblige her to accept it. As he would take no denial, she was necessitated to call in her brother, who very properly shewed him the way to the door, with a cane in his hand—a circumstance that humiliated Berners so greatly, that he insisted on his giving him satisfaction in the modern *honourable* manner, which Albert declining, he adopted the method you was witness to in the Park to provoke him to it."

Gertrude was almost incapable of return-

ing any answer, but at length said—"If you are assured, madam, that he has acted thus——"

"I am convinced of what I assert," returned Mrs. Stanhope; "your brother owned the charge, but endeavoured to exculpate Berners, by taking the whole blame on himself. Your mother I never informed of this event, as I thought it would only be giving her useless vexation, as Frederic is too old to be dictated to."

Mrs. Stanhope's servant entering with a letter for Gertrude, put an end to the discourse. It was from Frederic, and clearly demonstrated the uneasy state of his mind. Gertrude presented it to Mrs. Stanhope, who perused it with some concern, then returned it, saying—"I have no doubt he suffers, and in respect to you he speaks generously. I am sorry we are not better friends, but my resolution is unalterable. When you write, tell him I have not leisure yet to think of the ac-

counts, but will take some future opportunity."

Gertrude retired soon after to her apartment. What had passed surprised and shocked her; yet anxious to excuse to her own conscience the imprudent step she had taken, she endeavoured to think Berners less guilty. But even granting that to have been effected, how could she reconcile to her romantic fancy the humiliation he had suffered? for what hero of a love-tale had ever been so ignominiously treated, as to be driven from a house with a cane?

The kindness of Mrs. Stanhope was not forgotten amidst her other reflections—"How good, how considerate she is!" said Gertrude. "I must be a monster to have any concealments from her, yet it is impossible to tell her of that foolish promise, for she must despise me. Heigho! most probably I shall never marry. Berners neglected me strangely while I was before in London, and I have often resolved

ed to forget him; yet, weak creature that I was, in one short conversation I forgave all, and even gave him that abominable promise which has embittered every hour of my life since."

CHAPTER VII.

An Effort of Humanity—A Transition from Dislike to something like Approbation.

Mrs. Stanhope had nearly completed her business in town, when, one afternoon, as Gertrude and herself were sitting after dinner, the servant announced Mr. Montgomery. Desiring him to be immediately admitted, she had only time to say to Gertrude—" A material alteration has taken place in the fortunes of Montgomery,

and

and his sister, and which I did not relate to you, as I thought it might agreeably surprise you on our arrival in the country."

Montgomery's entrance prevented reply, had Gertrude been inclined to make one; but she felt no such inclination, for, of all men, Montgomery she most disliked, on account of Berners.

Albert's compliments of condolence shewed at once the sensibility of his heart, and his politeness; but dwelling little on a subject which he considered must be painful, he informed Mrs. Stanhope that he was come to town on purpose to engage a skilful architect to superintend some alterations his uncle intended to make—"After which," continued he, "Marian is to choose the decorations for the apartments which he means to be new furnished, as he judges truly that in that case her taste will be superior to mine. My commission I shall complete to-morrow, and, as in your letter you mentioned re-

turning

turning soon, perhaps, madam, you will honour me so far as to accept my attendance."

"I shall accept it with pleasure," answered Mrs. Stanhope, "as it may enliven our party, which I assure you is rather of the melancholy cast; and if you are not engaged this evening, you may be our cecisbeo for a walk, which will be serviceable to both Gertrude and myself."

Albert bowed, and after having taken coffee, attended the ladies in the coach to Hyde Park gate, where they got out to walk.

Never had Gertrude felt more uneasily situated; but obliged to behave politely to Albert, as her aunt's friend, her answers were coldly ceremonious; and as he presented his hand to help her from the carriage, hers almost involuntarily recoiled.

The evening was remarkably fine, and Mrs. Stanhope preferred walking by the side of the Serpentine River to entering Kensington Gardens, as she considered it

more private. Albert was uncommonly lively, and by his cheerful sallies endeavoured to amuse his companions. With Mrs. Stanhope he in some measure succeeded; but Gertrude was determined not to be amused, though she found some difficulty to maintain her resolution.

The evening began to draw in, and they were returning homeward, when they saw a woman on the opposite bank walking a quick pace. In cheerful conversation, neither Mrs. Stanhope nor Albert paid much attention to her; but Gertrude, whose eyes were fixed on the water, on a sudden uttered a dreadful scream, and, clasping her hands, exclaimed—"Merciful God! she will be drowned! she has leaped into the river!"

Mrs. Stanhope and Albert looked, and beheld the unhappy woman struggling in the water, her clothes for a minute supporting her. Mrs. Stanhope appeared stiffened with horror, for with extended arms she remained motionless. Albert was

equally

equally silent, but, with an alertness almost exceeding belief, tore off his coat, and jumped into the water. With dexterity and strength he swam across. The poor creature had sunk twice; a third time her hand appeared, but more towards the middle of the river. Albert lost not an instant, but seizing her, brought her safe to the bank, within thirty yards of the spot where he had left the ladies, it being the easiest place to get her to land.

The feelings of Mrs. Stanhope and her niece, during this scene, are not to be described; but the sight of Albert safe with the object for whom he had ventured his life, restored not only the powers of speech, but the use of their feet. Both running towards him, Gertrude exclaimed—"Oh, how happy! Heaven be praised!"

Mrs. Stanhope's fears had been equal; but time with her had somewhat calmed those lively feelings that Gertrude so involuntarily gave way to. The endeavours of both were added to those of Albert

her) to restore the unhappy creature before them. Gertrude, as Albert supported her, tied up her hair, which had fallen over her face, with her cambric handkerchief; then tore off her cloak, and wrapping it about her, said—"Oh, how unfortunate that I have nothing else! for warmth, I have heard, is the greatest restorative."

By this time a number of people began to flock round them, and offer their assistance, which Albert readily accepted, entreating Mrs. Stanhope and Gertrude to retire, for he hoped all would be well, as he was convinced the young woman was not dead. Mrs. Stanhope, as there was now sufficient assistance, consented, insisting on Albert's using her carriage; but he peremptorily declined it, saying he would send immediately for a hackney-coach when he had seen the young woman somewhat restored, and that they should hear from him in the course of the evening.

Mrs. Stanhope, obliged to acquiesce, with

with her niece, soon reached the Park gate, and, entering the carriage, returned home.

Mrs. Stanhope's anxiety still continued, when she reflected on the dripping state in which they had left Albert; and after some time she said—"Was ever any thing so imprudent as I have acted? I never, in my alarm, thought to ask Montgomery where he lodged; and he simply said, this afternoon, that he was at an hotel."

Gertrude felt equally anxious for the safety of both; for, in her alarm, she had almost forgotten her detestation of Albert; and as the woman, from what slight judgment she could form, was young and handsome, she had no doubt but love was the cause of the rash step she had taken.

Three hours had already elapsed, and Mrs. Stanhope, more and more uneasy, had sent her servants every where she supposed it likely to find Albert, but without effect. Supper had been announced, but

but declined; and silent anxiety sat on the features of both ladies, when a smart knock at the street-door made them start, and Montgomery's voice, asking for Mrs. Stanhope, at least convinced them of his safety. He had changed his clothes, and entered the room with his usual vivacity. —"I have the satisfaction, ladies," said he, "to inform you, that the poor girl who caused you such alarm is restored. We moved her to the first house, where the usual means were soon successful. I then went and changed my clothes; since which I have again called, and was informed she was asleep."

"I rejoice to hear it," said Mrs. Stanhope; "but surely it was the height of imprudence for you to venture out again this evening. Had you not better have gone to bed? It might have prevented the ill effects of cold. You could have sent us word that all was well."

"In the first place, madam," returned Albert, "I think exercise the most efficacious

cious for keeping off the effects of cold. In the next, I must inform you that from my childhood I have been accustomed to swimming, and indeed all bodily exercises; which, added to a constitution naturally robust, makes me less subject to cold or fatigue than those more delicately educated. The only inconvenience I experience is, that the water has made me uncommonly hungry."

Mrs. Stanhope immediately ordered supper, during which Albert, who saw her apprehensions for him had not entirely subsided, exerted his utmost vivacity to convince her that her fears were groundless; relating ludicrous stories, and assuming the Scottish dialect, until at length he banished her alarm, and provoked repeated laughter from Gertrude, however resolved to the contrary. At twelve, Mrs. Stanhope insisted on his using her carriage to his hotel; which, through politeness, being complied with, the ladies bade him

good

good-night, and soon after retired to their respective chambers.

The occurrences of the afternoon had been too numerous to suffer Gertrude to have any great inclination to sleep: therefore dismissing her maid, she sat some time reflecting on what had passed. Had her heart been disengaged, in all probability Montgomery's conduct in respect to the unhappy girl, by agreeing not only with her natural disposition, but her romantic one, would have gained it; for in reality she admired him, though she would not suffer herself to think so.

"To confess the truth," said she, "he is the most graceful man I ever saw; and his skill in swimming, though I reflect on it with horror, surpasses every idea I could form. He doubtless was aware of his dexterity before he undertook so dangerous an enterprise. He is too cheerful," continued she, after a moment's pause, "to possess much sensibility. Had Berners been fortunate enough to rescue a fellow-

creature

creature from such a situation, how different would have been his feelings! He possesses so much delicacy, so much softness, that he insensibly interests the heart, while, on the contrary, this boisterous Montgomery treats the greatest dangers merely as common occurrences, and by his vivacity destroys their effect on the mind. If what Mrs. Stanhope advances respecting Berners is true, though I cannot help thinking it has been exaggerated to her, I am not so much astonished at Montgomery's conduct; yet surely nothing was ever so dreadfully humiliating: Berners' affection to my brother is great, but could not, I think, carry him to such dishonourable lengths."

Weary with unpleasant reflections, Gertrude at length undressed, and went to rest.

CHAP.

CHAPTER VIII.

Curious People, like Listeners, frequently learn no good of themselves.

In the morning Montgomery sent a note to inquire after the ladies' health, informing them he was perfectly well, and, with their permission, would wait on them in the evening.

Mrs. Stanhope returning for answer, that she should be glad of his company, at the appointed time he was announced; when, having answered her inquiries respecting himself, her next question was of the young woman.

"She is so much recovered, madam," said he, "that I have removed her from the house, which was a public one, to Mrs.

Mrs. Mosely's, who I know will be kind to her. If we find her act properly, Marian, I fancy, can make free enough with my uncle's purse to assist her hereafter."

"Mine is ready on the same occasion," answered Mrs. Stanhope; "but have you been able to learn the cause of the rash act she was so near perpetrating?"

"Not entirely, madam. I do not think her depraved; but seduced and abandoned, she had neither religion nor fortitude to support her from despair."

"Poor creature!" replied Mrs. Stanhope; "if possible, in future she must be preserved from error. Would it be of any service for Gertrude and me to call at Mrs. Mosely's."

"As you please, madam," replied Albert; "but as she is perfectly safe, might it not be as well to know more of her before you were farther interested? She complains of her head, and questions distress her."

Mrs. Stanhope had so high an opinion

of Albert's honour and conduct, that she immediately acquiesced; but Gertrude, who had read a thousand stories of *heroes* who had fallen in love in such perilous situations, placed his answer to another account, and ardently longed to learn farther, as she had no doubt but that he wished to conceal her from them.

In two days Albert's business was completed; but the delay of the lawyers still detained Mrs. Stanhope, and Montgomery declined going without her; at length, however, the gentlemen of the robe appointed a morning to attend her with a final arrangement.

"My dear Gertrude," said she, as she informed her of it, "I know not how you will amuse yourself while I am employed with these prolix gentlemen, for I fancy it will be disagreeable for you to be present. What think you of an airing? The exercise will be of service."

Gertrude, whose curiosity respecting the young woman had not subsided, replied

plied—"I want a few articles, madam, from the milliner's; and if you have no objection, I will call and order them."

Mrs. Stanhope answered, that she also wanted some trifles, which she desired her to bespeak; and the coach being ordered, Gertrude soon reached Mrs. Mosely's.

Gertrude felt somewhat disappointed when informed that Mrs. Mosely was out; but on inquiry, finding she was soon expected, left the carriage, and said she would wait. A journeywoman immediately shewed her into the dining-room, where a young woman, who was at work alone, arose, and would have left the apartment, had not Gertrude, who immediately recognized her for the person who had so greatly interested her, entreated her so warmly to resume her seat, that common politeness obliged her to replace herself.

Miss St. Austyn observed her accurately. She was very young, and her features perfectly handsome; but her complexion

plexion pale and sickly, and her eyes sunken, destroyed the effect of the whole. Gertrude knew not how to begin, yet resolved, if possible, not to lose the opportunity; she at length said, though hesitatingly, and with great kindness—"Why do you work until your health is better? I am sure you have friends who will make such exertion unnecessary."

"Ah, madam," replied she, starting, "do you then know? Mr. Montgomery told me a young lady was the cause of my being saved; perhaps I am now before her."

"Do not be alarmed," replied Gertrude, replacing her, for she had risen: "I believe I first saw you; but to Mr. Montgomery's exertions alone you are indebted for safety. Endeavour to recover your health and spirits, and you shall not want assistance."

"Ah, madam!" answered she, "I am undeserving of your goodness; I have been a faulty abandoned creature, but I

will

will bear my shame in future with patience."

"You may have been unfortunate," replied Gertrude; "intentionally wicked I cannot think you would be."

"You think too well of me, madam," answered she. "You are young and beautiful, and I hope too rich for any man to attempt to deceive."

Gertrude shuddered. It appeared as if the young girl had divined her secret; but knowing that impossible, she said—"It would distress you too much to inform me of your misfortunes, or I would request it, as I might the more interest my aunt in your favour."

"So much do I feel I owe you, madam," replied she, "that I have no right nor inclination to refuse, but in one circumstance, which, however, will be immaterial to you; I must conceal the name of a lady, having pledged my word on that subject to Mr. Montgomery, who says he is assured it is so scandalous a falsehood,

falsehood, that it ought never to be mentioned."

Gertrude's suspicions of Montgomery recurred with redoubled force; and desiring the young woman to consider her as a friend, and relate only what she thought fit, after a short pause she began as follows:—

"My name is Elizabeth Southern—Bitter reflection! two short months ago I had a mother. She kept a house, and supported herself and me creditably, by letting lodgings, for she had been a widow many years. About twelve months ago, I went into the country, to stay with my aunt, who was sick, and remained some time with her, until she being nearly recovered, I returned home. During my absence, my mother had taken two new lodgers, a Mr. St. Austyn, and his friend Mr. Berners. We saw very little of the gentlemen, for they were usually out——But bless me, madam, you are ill—you will faint—I will call assistance."

Gertrude caught her gown, and begged her to desist, saying she was subject to be suddenly sick, entreated her not to mind it, but continue her story.

"I had been at home but a few days, when, one morning, my mother was seized with an apoplectic fit. My cries brought down Mr. St. Austyn, who, with unparalleled kindness, ran instantly for help, for I had no one at home. My mother recovered, and Mr. St. Austyn left our house two or three days after, to go into the country; but his friend excused himself, as he afterwards told me, on my account, for he could not bear to leave me. In short, madam, he avowed [illegible] me every where, and spoke in the most honourable manner; but begged me to be secret, even to my mother, for a short time, until he had settled an affair that gave him much concern, and which was no other than his being engaged to marry a lady of rank and fortune, whose friends would ruin him if he refused.

As I rather disbelieved this, he shewed me a paper that corroborated what he said, as it was a promise of marriage from a lady, and signed with her name.—Indeed, Miss, you are ill: permit me to call some one."

Gertrude caught her hand.—"No," said she; "a little water will restore me."

Betsey Southern fetched a glass of water, which Gertrude having drank, she entreated her to continue, saying—"But you have not mentioned the lady's name; that you cannot be bound to conceal."

"Indeed, madam, that is the only circumstance. I related the whole to Mr. Montgomery; but he made me promise, whoever questioned me, never more to disclose it; nor will I make so ungrateful a return for his saving my life as to forfeit my word. Beside, he said he was assured it was a scandalous falsehood and forgery, for that Mr. Berners was too insignificant to be thought of either by the lady or her friends. I however, madam,

 did

did not suppose the man I loved a villain, and, no friend to advise with, believed all he said; frequently meeting him in the Park, and elsewhere in public places, without any behaviour of his that could alarm my fears. At length Mr. St. Austyn returned from the country, and by what means I know not, but he had surely discovered our secret intimacy, for he gave up the lodgings in a few days; and never shall the morning he went away be erased from my memory. He saluted and bid me farewell before my mother, saying that he should not have taken that liberty in her absence; then markingly told me, that when I met with a man, who, to my own consent, added *my mother's approbation*, he should think himself happy to present me to him at the altar, giving me a ring as a memorial. Even this caution was unavailing. Mr. Berners had more power than virtue; for I continued meeting him as before, until one fatal evening he complained

ed of being ill, and entreated me to enter a house with him. Here he persuaded me to take a glass of lemonade.—Excuse me, madam, from what followed—I scarcely know myself. Suffice it, that had it been arsenic, I had been happy."

Betsey for some moments was incapable of proceeding, and Gertrude equally so to entreat it.

"At length, madam, he put me into a coach, and accompanied me nearly to my mother's, for I appeared to myself as one intoxicated with liquor. I knocked repeatedly, but no one answered; and my mother and the servant being alone in the house, I felt some alarm. The watchman passed, calling eleven o'clock. Until that moment I had no idea of the hour; and how to excuse such a long absence, in some measure took place of my fears. The watchman now knocked for me, and at length succeeded in awakening the maid, who, half asleep, came

 down,

down, and opened the door.—' Bless me, Miss!' said she, 'I wonder my mistress has not let you in. She ordered me to go to bed, but would not stir herself; she was dreadfully uneasy, but doubtless has fallen asleep.' I snatched the candle, which she had lighted at the watchman's lantern, rushed into the back-parlour, where my mother usually slept, and there, (do I live to relate it?) beheld her black, stiff, and dead. Oh, Miss, you weep. I could weep before I had committed such crimes, but now my brain is burnt up; you know not what comfort it gives me when I can shed tears."

A short pause ensued, and Betsey continued—" My mother, anxious for my safety, and doubtless supposing something dreadful from my long absence, had been seized with a second apoplectic fit; and though the doctor declared, that had I been present, all assistance would have been useless, yet I never shall think but

alarm

alarm for my absence brought it on, and that God snatched her away that she might never know my shame."

The wildness in Betsey's eyes alarmed the trembling Gertrude, and taking her hand, she said—"You shall tell me more when we next meet; at present you are too much affected."

"No," replied she, "I will never more, if possible, enter on the subject. Listen to it now—I shall speedily have concluded. My mother was buried, and being in debt, our goods were sold to pay them, and myself removed into a little lodging at Knightsbridge, where I never heard nor saw any thing of Berners until that fatal evening Mr. Montgomery saved me, when on a sudden he entered my chamber, and talked something of death and the country; but indeed I knew not what, for my head ached sadly. I only remember he said, that now my mother was gone, we could enjoy ourselves without so much trouble; and then endea-

vouring

vouring to clasp me in his arms, I shrunk from him, rushed down stairs, and into the Park——"

"Spare me—spare yourself!" interrupted Gertrude. "What has my unpardonable curiosity occasioned? Great God! that I of all people should be destined to tear open your wounds!"

"You are an angel!" exclaimed Betsey, "for you have done for me what I cannot do for myself—wept for me. May I not know your name? Indeed, while I live I will pray for you; but surely you will condescend to see me again?"

"Undoubtedly I will," answered Gertrude; "you shall never want a friend, while I have life or power to help you."

"Mr. Montgomery said you were good and gentle, and that I should know your name hereafter."

"It is useless and cruel to conceal it—my——"

The voice of Montgomery coming hastily up stairs prevented Gertrude from continuing.

continuing. How different were her ideas of him from those she entertained when she entered the house! His reason for keeping both her aunt and herself away from Mrs. Mosely's was now clearly proved not to be on his account, but on theirs; his binding Betsey likewise to secrecy, all conspired to overwhelm her at once with gratitude and shame; and gladly would she have concealed herself any where from his presence.

"Here and alone!" exclaimed Montgomery, entering the room without ceremony. "Pardon me, madam, if I say this visit is imprudent. Miss Southern wants quiet and rest; questions distract her, and I know that you would not injure her. I also had flattered myself that a promise she had made me——"

"Nor have I forfeited it," interrupted she, mournfully. "You think my head is bad, and indeed it is so; but yet, while I can remember my own shame and my mother's death, I shall also remember my obligations—

obligations—I have scandalized no innocent. *She* wept for me," pointing to Gertrude, "and, though you declined it, would have told me her name."

"I beg, madam—I entreat," said Albert, taking Gertrude's hand, "that you return home."

"I cannot leave her unsatisfied," replied Gertrude, endeavouring to withdraw her hand.

"I insist, madam." Then turning to Betsey, he said—"I have no doubt, Miss Southern, that this lady will be your friend; I will also venture to promise for my sister; but do not seek to learn what at this moment is improper for you to know."

With these words, scarcely leaving Gertrude an alternative, he led her from the room.

As they entered the parlour, Montgomery, releasing Miss St. Austyn's hand, said—"Pardon, madam, my rude intrusion; but I feared the tenderness of your

nature

nature might lead you into explanations that I judged improper. The miseries this poor girl has suffered bewilder her; time may sooth her anguish, when it will be soon enough for her to be informed to whom she is obliged."

"Not to me," said Gertrude, not daring to raise her eyes for fear of meeting those of Montgomery.

To the great relief of Gertrude, Mrs. Mosely at that moment entered, and Albert walked into the shop, though he by no means appeared inclined to leave her behind him. With some difficulty she recollected the orders she had to give, and bidding Mrs. Mosely good-morning, prepared to depart. Montgomery presented his hand to help her into the carriage, saying he hoped to have the honour of seeing her aunt in the evening. Gertrude, who was unequal to conversation, bowed, without raising her eyes, or uttering a word.

"Merciful God, what have I done!" said

said she, when alone; "my curiosity is properly repaid, and what a monster have I fixed upon to look up to for future happiness and protection! Never! Sooner would I face death than give my hand to such a man. How arbitrary did I think Mrs. Stanhope's proceeding! I now see it was dictated by reason and judgment. Poor Frederic, to fall into such hands! Barbarous, unfeeling, unprincipled hypocrite, to expose my folly in order to facilitate his own villany! In what a light must I appear to my aunt when it comes to be known! What can Montgomery think of me! Perhaps he places me on a parallel with the poor deluded girl whose life he preserved. Oh! I cannot bear the reflection. Yet how to act without advice; and whom dare I consult in such a crisis? Mrs. Stanhope, I am sure, loves me; but by revealing all, at once to forfeit her good opinion, I cannot bear to think of. Yet should she hear it by any other means, it would be yet more dreadful!

ful. There appears to me but one alternative, in which Heaven support me! It is to throw myself at her feet, and confess all. If she spurns me, at least I shall enjoy the reflection that in this *last* act I did my duty, and it is fit that such errors as mine should be followed by bitter repentance."

These uneasy thoughts employed Gertrude during her way home. Mrs. Stanhope's visitors had completed their business, and were gone. Her cheeks wan, and her eyes swollen, alarmed her aunt, who, with the most soothing kindness, inquired what had happened.

"My dear madam," replied Gertrude, endeavouring to assume an air of calmness that she was far from feeling, "I have suffered greatly this morning, and am sensible that I deserve it all. My unpardonable curiosity, rather than any real necessity, took me to Mrs. Mosely's, in order to see the unhappy girl Mr. Montgomery has placed there. I succeeded, heard her story,

story, and have, among other painful subjects, learned that my life has hitherto been replete with error and folly."

Mrs. Stanhope gazed at her with astonishment—"*Your* life!" said she: "indeed, my dear girl, your curiosity was very blameable, but the effect it appears to have produced is sufficient without reproach."

"Ah, madam, what reproach so bitter as self-reproach? Should you ever despise me—but my resolution is taken; you shall see my heart without disguise, whatever be the consequence."

Mrs. Stanhope almost thought her deranged.—"My love," said she, "this poor girl's misfortunes have made too great an impression on you."

"Oh, madam!" exclaimed Gertrude, bursting into tears, "your kindness is more painful to me than harshness, for I feel how little I deserve it. You know not how dreadfully imprudent I have been; and though not absolutely guilty, it is,

perhaps

perhaps more the effect of chance than any merit I can assume."

"Gertrude," said Mrs. Stanhope, now really alarmed, "you distress me; you ought to be assured of my affection: confide then in me—the advice of a friend may be salutary."

Gertrude fell at her feet, and, concealing her face, replied—"What, madam, will you say, when I confess that I have given a promise of marriage to the greatest villain that ever disgraced human nature?"

"I must say," returned Mrs. Stanhope, "that you have acted very imprudently, as your heart already appears to inform you; but if you are not married, which I think impossible, there is yet room for hope. But who has been vile enough to practise thus on your inexperience?"

"I dare not name him."

"Berners, then," said Mrs. Stanhope. "I once or twice thought there was something particular in his behaviour; but as

I hate

I hate suspicion, banished the idea. Say, have I not judged rightly?"

Gertrude's silence was an affirmative.

"Deliberate, despicable villain! My heart was never satisfied with that man. But how happens it, Gertrude, that your mind is so changed? for now I recollect that even a few days ago you spoke respectfully of him."

Gertrude, as well as her tears and emotion would permit, related all that had passed that morning.

"Merciful Heaven!" said Mrs. Stanhope, as she concluded, "from what a precipice have you escaped! The immediate hand of Providence was in your meeting with this girl. Berners doubtless supposed, that at my sister's death your fortune would be at your own disposal; for he could have no idea but to impose on your inexperience, as a promise thus obtained under age cannot be binding. Cheer up, therefore; my displeasure shall not be added to your sufferings; the confidence

fidence you have shewn flatters me that you will act cautiously for the future."

Gertrude could not thank her, but felt as if an oppressive weight was removed from her breast; and, when more composed, related every circumstance from which her folly with Berners had arisen.

"Your brother, I think," said Mrs. Stanhope, "cannot be privy to this business; I will, however, write to him when we reach home. If he is, I utterly renounce him for ever."

Gertrude entirely exculpated Frederic, by relating the conversation that had taken place in Yorkshire.

Towards evening Montgomery was announced, and Gertrude, entreating her aunt's excuse, withdrew to her chamber.

CHAPTER IX.

Departure for the Country—An old Bachelor recommending Marriage.

Mrs. Stanhope immediately entered on the topic which was most on her thoughts, and without disguise related the whole to Albert, concluding by asking him why he had not at first informed her of it?

"To confess the truth, madam," replied he, "I hoped, nay I believed, the part in which Miss St. Austyn's name occurred, to be a scandalous falsehood, until this morning, when her blushes and confusion made me waver in that opinion. To mention it to Miss St. Austyn, had I even found an opportunity, I felt would be highly improper; and excuse me when I freely

freely declare that I could not endure to name to you. I had therefore resolved to entrust the whole to Marian, and desired her to disclose it to Miss St. Austyn, as I was assured she would treat the subject more delicately than I could. Miss Southern believes the paper a forgery, as does also Mrs. Mosely, who was present when she made the relation, and my fears this day were, that Miss St. Austyn should undeceive them if it was not really so. Had I been on terms of friendship with Mr. St. Austyn, I should not have hesitated to inform him of the whole. As it is, it will have more effect from you, and doubtless unmask the villain who so long had deceived him, and would have made a prey of the unsuspecting innocence of his sister."

After some farther discourse, Mrs. Stanhope informed Albert that she should be ready the ensuing morning to depart for the country, and he took leave at an early hour.

Albert, on horseback, attended the ladies at the time Mrs. Stanhope had appointed, and during the journey, which lasted two days, accompanied their chaise. The weather was fine. Mrs. Stanhope was kind, and Albert polite and attentive; but nothing could remove the depression of Gertrude, who, severely humiliated in her own eyes, considered herself unavoidably so in those of her companions.

On their arrival they found the colonel and Marian waiting to receive them. From the first information he had obtained of Mrs. Stanhope having charge of her niece, he had ardently wished her to be such as might captivate his nephew, whom he longed to see married. The beauty of Gertrude, and the gentleness of her manners, therefore enchanted him; and attributing the cloud of melancholy that hung over her merely to her recent loss, he determined to lose no time in declaring his thoughts to Montgomery.

Accordingly, after they had supped, they returned

returned to Blackwood, Marian having resumed her situation at the Vale.

On reaching home, the colonel called for a bottle of wine, and pouring out a bumper, winked at his nephew, and drank Gertrude St. Austyn.

"With all my heart, sir," replied Montgomery, pledging his uncle's toast.

"A good pretty girl, Albert."

"A very fine girl, sir."

"This is just what I wished. I all along hoped you would like her."

"Every one related to Mrs. Stanhope, sir, must, in some measure, be estimable to me."

"*Estimable* to the devil! Why, you are as cool as a cucumber in the business; at your age, such a girl would have set my heart in a blaze."

"Heaven be praised, sir, mine is not made of such inflammable materials!"

"So much the worse, sir. A susceptible heart, at all events, is preferable to an impenetrable one."

 "That

"That must be granted, sir," returned Albert; "but extremes of all kinds are dangerous."

"Commend me to the moderation of a fellow of twenty-two! Why, zounds! I judged of you by myself; I had no moderation at your age."

"With so susceptible a heart, sir," said Montgomery, "I am astonished you never married."

"You are for ever poking your nose where you have no business," answered the colonel: "but, good sir, that your astonishment may cease, the real reason perhaps was, that I did not feel that disposition in myself I thought necessary to make a deserving woman happy."

"My dear uncle, I beg pardon for the question, but the reason is too respectable not to do you honour."

"Your humble servant, sir: but that wont do. Please to come back to where we left off, and answer this plain question. Should you like Miss St. Austyn for a wife?

wife? I hope you understand me now."

"Perfectly, sir; but really I have never given the subject a thought. It is an honour——"

"Honour! A fool's head! The plain truth is, you do not like the girl, or you are not so devilish modest. I wonder what the plague you would have! Is she not a charming girl, almost as handsome as Marian? Is she not your friend Mrs. Stanhope's niece, and has she not a good fortune?"

"Miss St. Austyn, sir, in my opinion, is handsomer than Marian, and on her own account, as well as Mrs. Stanhope's, respectable; and for her fortune——"

"It is above your expectations, or beneath your consideration, sir," interrupted the colonel. "One of these wise speeches you were on the point of concluding with; and now, to answer to the first, I think that I am the best judge of the business, that Miss St. Austyn's fortune is *not* above what you may expect; or, sir, if

if you meant that it was beneath your consideration, at least you might endow an hospital for idiots, and be yourself at the head of the community."

Montgomery smiled without reply.

"Do not laugh, sir, when you provoke me. I suppose you think that I am more calculated to superintend such an establishment. You own the girl handsome and respectable; yet forsooth you cannot, I suppose, love her. Do not go too far, Albert; I am not the first old fool who, born mad, has got a young wife, and an heir to his estate."

"A child of your own, sir, would have the nearest claim to your favour."

"Zounds, sir! I do not suppose that it would be my own: but answer me—pray, do you never intend to marry?"

"I have no objection to marriage, sir; on the contrary, the example of my parents has rendered the state estimable to me: but even granting me willing to look up to so superior a match as Miss St. Austyn,

which

which I am far from intending, how can I be assured she would not refuse me?"

"Try her; not one woman in a thousand would refuse such a fellow as you, if you chose to be upon your mettle. How speedily did you win my heart! and do you think women are more difficult to please?"

"The inference is not just, sir," replied Montgomery. "I had a friend previously in the fort."

"That's true, however, and the treacherous dog surrendered the citadel whether I would or not."

"And when I merit to be driven from it intentionally, may I be plunged into every misery that can oppress man!"

The colonel made no reply, but stretched out his hand to his nephew, drank his health in a bumper, wished him cordially a good-night, and retired to his chamber.

CHAPTER X.

A Libertine's Feelings.

OPPRESSED with melancholy, Frederic remained near a month in Yorkshire, the persuasions of Berners being unavailing to banish sorrow by the pleasures of the metropolis. At this period he received a demand for a settlement, from the Jew who had advanced the money, which obliged him to dispatch Berners on that business, and who arrived in London the day Montgomery providentially saved Betsey Southern.

The first hours Berners had given to business, but the evening hanging heavily on his hands, she occurred to his memory. He had left town the day after having effected his purpose, and without bestowing a thought

thought on the anguish he had planted in her bosom.

Finding her mother's house shut up, he inquired among the neighbours, and was soon informed of her death, and the daughter's removal. No pang of compunction touched Berners. Hastening to her address, he entered her apartment with his usual levity; for once successful, he had no doubt of reducing the unhappy girl to become a willing votary of dishonour; but rather imprudent than naturally wicked, the shock of her mother's death, and the absence of her lover, had given her time to reflect, and that so acutely, that at times it almost amounted to phrenzy. Berners' behaviour was not calculated to sooth her, for he no longer considered it necessary to assume a conduct foreign to his character, and clasping her in his arms, he congratulated her on what had happened, as it left her entirely mistress of her own actions. This insult, as she now felt it, was too great to be endured; starting from his embrace, she

rushed

rushed from the house into the street, and with wild disordered steps reached the Park, where she made her desperate attempt without reflection, and to escape a retrospection she could no longer bear. Berners was at first amazed at her sudden flight; but judging that his neglect and other circumstances had displeased her, determined for the present to give up the pursuit; and having waited some time, and finding she did not return, he left a note and retired, resolved to seek amusement elsewhere.

As it was not yet dark, he determined to cross Hyde Park, and had nearly reached Grosvenor-gate, when a crowd attracted his attention, though not sufficiently to have made him stop, had he not discovered at the head of the party the man on earth he most abhorred, and from his conduct and bodily strength equally dreaded. Prudence and mingled curiosity made him draw aside, for he observed Montgomery was dripping with water; and questioning

tioning a man, who was somewhat behind the crowd, he soon learned that the young gentleman had brought the body of a woman that had drowned herself out of the water.

"Is she dead?" said Berners carelessly.

"Dead! ay, master! dead as a door-nail," replied the man; "you may see her if you get into the crowd; she seems to have been a pretty wench, and quite young."

Beauty was never uninteresting to Berners, and drawing nearer, he glanced his eyes over the shoulders of some of the surrounding multitude, and beheld what might have proved fatal to any man who had the smallest spark of feeling or humanity, the victim of his unrestrained vices, pale and apparently dead, borne by four men, who were conveying her to the nearest house.

"Confusion!" exclaimed he, starting back, and with a quick pace hastening from the sight, "is it possible the girl should

should have been such an idiot? Montgomery too, of all men, Quixote-like, to drive after her, appears almost surpassing belief; and though her death shocks me, yet had he perished with her, I think I could have endured the evil for the sake of the good; but, by my soul! I think he is invulnerable, and my evil genius, sure; for go where I will, he is perpetually crossing my way."

Berners walked hastily back until he reached Piccadilly, almost without noticing where he was going. At length becoming more collected, he repented he had not watched where the body was taken; a few moments reflection however banished that idea; for as the dead tell no tales, he thought it most prudent not to appear in the business, and he had no doubt, from her appearance, that every spark of life was extinguished. His pleasurable schemes were however destroyed for the evening, and calling a coach, he soon reached home, when, after drinking

a double

a double quantity of wine to stifle reflection, he retired to rest.

On the ensuing morning, Berners, by appointment, met the usurer who had advanced the money; but some dispute happening in the arrangement, he declined the final settlement until Frederic should be present, and in consequence, by that evening's post, requested his return.

Alone, and almost weary with his stay in the country, Frederic immediately obeyed the summons. His contrition time had softened, and the same evil spirit again at his elbow, his laudable resolution, formed in the hour of reflection, began to give way; his female engagement was renewed; and in addition to his townhouse, a ready-furnished one near Kew was hired, for the purpose of entertaining select parties of both sexes; in short, riot, which libertines call pleasure, was again the business of the day, and dissipation that of the night. Notwithstanding, it is but justice to allow that he had yet his moments

ments of compunction; but it is the nature of vice, by frequent repetition, to deaden the feelings.

Berners too was not without his moments of uneasiness, for though he trusted greatly to the power he had over the mind of Frederic, yet the despicable arts he had used to ensnare his sister frequently overwhelmed him with fear, lest they should be discovered; and uncertain how to act in such a crisis, he had not written to Gertrude since her mother's death. To obtain Mrs. Stanhope's consent he well knew was impossible, and to encumber himself with a portionless wife, he had not ever the most distant inclination, for he was far from suspecting the discovery Gertrude had made.

That the coolness between Mrs. Stanhope and her nephew continued, gave him infinite satisfaction, as it prevented all intercourse, and Miss St. Austyn, he had no doubt, would keep the secret of her imprudence concealed for her own sake.

Thus

Thus were they situated, when one morning, Frederic being out, and Berners alone, the servant entered with several letters, and laying them on the table, retired. The address of one of them instantly caught Berners' attention, as it was the writing of Gertrude; and though it was certainly nothing extraordinary for a sister to write to her brother, yet guilt had made him suspicious. He examined yet further: one in a fair Italian hand increased his curiosity, as he knew it for Mrs. Stanhope's; and resolving not to bear the torments of suspense, he put both in his pocket, and retired to his chamber.

That from Mrs. Stanhope contained his own written promise to Gertrude—a sight that at once made him congratulate himself on the step he had taken; it likewise disclosed the whole of his duplicity, and conjured her nephew, in terms mingled with affection, to give up all intercourse with so bad a man.—" If you refuse," added she, towards the end of the letter,

" we

"we are henceforward strangers for ever; duty, honour, rectitude, all require it: I flatter myself you cannot remain on terms of friendship with one who would have betrayed your sister, meanly to have preyed on her fortune: thank Heaven, the clause in my sister's will was not necessary to be enforced; an unexpected but providential event revealed her danger, yet, while it disclosed her weakness and inexperience, has rendered her still dearer to my heart, as we have now that mutual confidence in each other, that is the only real cement of friendship. Farewell! I cannot doubt but thus convinced, you will hasten hither; Gertrude being impatient to embrace a brother, and myself a nephew, whom I wish to esteem."

Such was the language of Mrs. Stanhope's letter; and containing a disclosure of so much duplicity, had it been received, there can be no doubt but that it would have awakened Frederic to a sense of duty

that

that must have shaken off the chains of vice, which almost, in spite of inclination, held him enslaved.

Berners scarcely gave himself time to peruse Mrs. Stanhope's letter, before he tore open that of Gertrude; but this by no means gratified his curiosity, as it contained nothing but sisterly tenderness, intermingled with some self-reflections, though, without entering into particulars, that convinced him that he had lost the power which he once flattered himself he held over her heart.

His pride wounded by this idea, he threw the letter from him, exclaiming—"Cursed jilt—emblem of the whole sex! 'tis Montgomery has caused this revolution; his infernal prying temper has doubtless discovered something respecting Southern. She, however, could tell no tales. Yet," continued he, after a pause, "perhaps some of my letters might be found, which, no doubt, he would turn to his advantage."

A double

A double knock at the street-door broke on his contemplations, and not doubting it was Frederic, he hastily put up the letters, and went to meet him.

Berners' fraud passed unsuspected; and though Frederic, in his reflective moments, frequently wondered at his sister's silence, yet he attributed it solely to Mrs. Stanhope, whose anger he figured to himself as implacable; and though he would have given worlds to have learned news respecting Marian and Montgomery, whose situation he was totally uninformed of, yet pride forbade his asking questions, or again writing to his sister, as he supposed his last letter, though conciliatory, and written with anguish, had not as yet procured him an answer.

CHAPTER XI.

A Jaunt back to Dorsetshire.

Though Gertrude was, for a considerable time, abashed and deeply wounded with the remembrance of the past, yet the kindness of Mrs. Stanhope, and the unwearied assiduities of Marian, began to dispel the gloom, and by degrees she mingled with more satisfaction in the parties formed between the family at Blackwood and that at the Vale.

The disposal of time was so different from what Gertrude had ever been accustomed to, that she was perpetually employed; and she saw with admiration her aunt and Marian constantly engaged in some humane or praiseworthy action, though

though without the affectation of feelings that exist only in fiction.

To be merely a spectator was not consonant with the temper of Gertrude, however misled by education; she began to take an active part in their pursuits, and, by thinking more of others, insensibly thought less of herself. With Marian, as with Mrs. Stanhope, she had no concealments; but the presence of Albert was still a restraint upon her; for though she respected him, she could not lose the idea that he was acquainted with her folly. That she received no answer to the letter she had written to her brother, gave her considerable uneasiness, particularly as Mrs. Stanhope insisted that his silence could only proceed from his approbation of Berners' duplicity—"My fears," said that lady, "are now confirmed, and I will endeavour to forget our relationship; had he possessed the smallest spark of honour, such villany must have blown it to a flame; but it is now past

past all doubt that he was privy to Berners obtaining the written promise; and shame, or some sinister motive, keeps him silent. I am, however, glad that I also wrote to him, as he can hereafter have no excuse to plead, and, in the meantime, must entreat, Gertrude, that you write no more until some answer shall be returned, that may lead us to judge of their future schemes."

Gertrude, however attached to her brother, could not refute this opinion, and felt too much gratitude to her aunt not to make the promise she required.

Among the whole group, not one was so dissatisfied as the colonel; he ardently wished to bring about an union between Albert and Gertrude, but the behaviour of the first gave him no hopes of love; and that of the latter was so timid, that he concluded all his wishes would be unavailing; they were, however, not patiently relinquished, Montgomery receiving daily some petulant lectures, all of which

which were answered with a cheerfulness and good humour that never failed to disarm his uncle's anger.

The omissions in Gertrude's education, it was Mrs. Stanhope's most assiduous care to rectify; nor was she indifferently seconded by Marian, though her instructions were given with so much ease and friendship, that Gertrude felt herself improved and gratified without humiliation.

Though her favourite romantic taste in reading still continued, yet the study of music and drawing employed so much of her time, that it was frequently neglected; and as she improved rapidly, a wish of excelling made her doubly assiduous; so that Mrs. Stanhope would often laughingly say—"My dear Gertrude, you grow unpardonably unfeeling; for on opening your book, I find by the mark, that you left your heroine in a most perilous situation, and past all hope of human succour; you were not accustomed to be so cruel."

Gertrude, who had now no fear of her aunt, usually answered in the same manner.—"Indeed, madam, I humbly beg her pardon, but something more momentous tore me away, and that willingly, as I had not the most distant fear but that some extraordinary event would interpose, or valorous hero appear at the last extremity to her rescue."

Marian and Gertrude alternately read to Mrs. Stanhope in the evening, when they were without company; and thus, by insensibly drawing Gertrude's ideas into another channel, Mrs. Stanhope had the pleasure to contemplate, that in all probability she would be able to form her to her most ardent wishes. In the meantime, the colonel had been busied in the improvement and alteration of his estate, which being nearly finished, he entreated Mrs. Stanhope and the young ladies to direct the internal decorations; but as these could not be furnished in the country, it was at length agreed that Marian should

should accompany him to London, to make the necessary selection. A few days previous to their departure, Gertrude being alone with her aunt, and Marian addressing the former, she said, with some confusion—"I have a favour to beg, my dear madam, though I confess I feel distressed to ask it, as it must recall to your memory what I would wish to obliterate from it for ever."

Mrs. Stanhope's only reply was an affectionate salute, and taking her niece's hand, she waited in silence to hear her request.

"It is," said Gertrude, blushing, and casting down her eyes, "in behalf of poor Miss Southern. Oh, madam, how much do I owe her! her unhappy story first banished the delusion under which I laboured; and indeed I don't think I ever could enjoy happiness, was she not secured from want. Miss Montgomery has shewn me one of Mrs. Mosely's letters: she speaks of her in the most respectful terms, and

says

says her health is greatly restored:—her misfortune," continued she, a deeper crimson colouring her cheek, "was almost involuntary, and her imprudence far inferior to mine: she regarded Berners as a man who loved and would raise her to a rank which her mother could not fail to approve when informed of it; while I, with equally unpardonable concealment, knew that however my parents might approve him as a tutor, such an alliance must have estranged us for ever."

"My dear Gertrude," interrupted Mrs. Stanhope, smiling, "you said your request was in behalf of Miss Southern, and you are talking about yourself."

The gentleness of this reply, which Gertrude plainly understood to preclude her self-accusation, overpowered her, and struggling a moment with her emotion, she continued—"Miss Montgomery means to offer Mrs. Mosely the management of the colonel's household, which is his own request; poor Betsey will then have a new

situation to seek; though I am not to learn that the generosity of Mr. Montgomery and Marian will still befriend her, yet as I want some one immediately about my person, I should be happy to offer her that situation."

"Have you considered that though she is acquainted with the name of Gertrude St. Austyn, yet she thinks the paper Berners shewed her a forgery? but your conduct will make it appear otherwise."

"Indeed, madam," replied Gertrude, "she seems to possess so grateful a heart, that I should not hesitate to tell her the truth."

"If it were to answer any proper purpose, silence would be folly; but as it can only gratify curiosity, I hold it as well to let the subject pass without explanation. Mrs. Mosely, I am convinced, is a good character; she is accustomed to, and partial to Miss Southern; and as an assistant will be undoubtedly necessary to her as housekeeper to the colonel, I think it a very eligible

gible situation, as she will still remain immediately under her care: we shall then frequently see her, and be able to judge of her merits; and believe me, Gertrude, if deserving, she shall neither want my countenance nor protection."

Miss St. Austyn and Marian had only time to express their satisfaction at this arrangement, when the colonel and Montgomery were announced. After the common salutations, Mrs. Stanhope informed them of the wish they had been expressing of being serviceable to Miss Southern, of whom the colonel knew nothing, farther than that his nephew had saved her from drowning; he however immediately acquiesced, and Montgomery replied—"I cannot say but that I shall be happy to have her placed in security, and as she will still remain under the guidance of Mrs. Mosely, I am convinced it will be eligible for her."

"Well said, *Prudence*," interrupted the colonel, with his accustomed bluntness; "I'll answer for it, that let her be

 beautiful

beautiful as Venus, she'll be as safe at Blackwood, even without Mrs. Mosely, as in a sisterhood of nuns.—*Joseph* here," slapping Montgomery on the back, "would never have reduced St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins to cut off their noses; he would not hesitate to leave his robe behind in his flight from temptation."

"My good sir," returned Mrs. Stanhope, with difficulty repressing a smile, and not appearing to notice the colonel's manner, "I believe my young friend merits your praise, but we will spare him as he is present."

"Praise! Egad! I meant no such thing. I detest a libertine, for I regard him as the pest of society, whom no honour can hold, if self-gratification interferes; yet, notwithstanding this, madam, I would not have a young fellow a mere disciple of Zeno, a stoic as insensible to the power of beauty as the marble figure, on his great-grandfather's monument."

"My

"My dear uncle," interrupted Montgomery, laughing, "when did I shew this insensibility? am I not always ready to allow merit and beauty wherever I find them?"

"Observe, madam, observe," said the colonel, "to shew his insensibility, the rogue has named merit first.—Yes, sir, I allow that you frequently speak of both with apparent rapture; but what of that? 'tis merely as some chaps admire and cheapen pictures, to be thought connoisseurs, without intention to buy."

"But my brother, my dear uncle, does intend to *buy* one of these days," said Marian archly; "he only waits to *lay out his heart* to the best advantage."

"You are a coaxing gipsy," answered the colonel, patting her cheek, "and I am convinced have a more susceptible heart than his; therefore remember what I say—keep a tight, watch over, it, that it does not steal out at your eyes before you are aware."

 "Did

"Did I deserve this for taking Albert's part?" said Marian, laughing.

"Perhaps not," returned the colonel; "you are a good girl, and I love you dearly; but for your brother, he would provoke a saint; he knows I wish to see him married, but neither my threats or entreaties have any power. God forgive me! I once threatened to get married myself if he would not, but it had no effect; and the day after, to try the opposite extreme, I offered to settle two-thirds of my fortune on him, but it was still the same; and now to leave him no excuse, I here, before his friend Mrs. Stanhope, repeat my proposal with this emendation, that as I am resolved to live and to die with him, to make over my whole property to him on the day of his marriage."

"Then," replied Montgomery with warmth, "will I never marry at all.— To be dependent on you, sir, is at once my duty and pride, and the woman who

cannot

cannot resolve to share that dependence, shall never share my heart."

"Hang the fellow! I believe he does it on purpose to—to——Pray, madam, employ him somehow or other for a short time; I shall not bear to look at him this half-hour."

Albert rose to leave the room, when Mrs. Stanhope addressing her niece and Marian, said—"My good girls, pray accompany Mr. Montgomery in his banishment; a little music will, I am sure, be agreeable; and for the colonel and myself, we will follow speedily."

CHAPTER XII.

Advice.

The colonel was no sooner seated, than Mrs. Stanhope addressing him, said—"Forgive me, sir, if now we are alone, I use the liberty of friendship, and censure your conduct. Why will you press your nephew to hasten into a state that requires the utmost reflection? To suppose that he has an aversion to marriage, because he refuses to enter into it rashly, you cannot credit in your calmer moments; on the contrary, it must necessarily increase your estimation of his character, as it proves it totally disinterested. He is yet very young, and has doubtless never seen the woman that he could wish to pass his life with;

with; and would you require him to make a choice which he might repent in a month, and drag through a slavery of years with a woman different from him in temper and pursuits? Believe me, my good colonel, your whole fortune, however large, could not compensate such a sacrifice. Leave the business to time without interference, and should he make a choice, and it even prove not quite satisfactory, at least you could not accuse yourself of having occasioned it."

"True, madam, in that case I should indeed be the most unhappy dog in the world: but I was secure from that, for the lady I had chosen—"

"Chosen?" interrupted Mrs. Stanhope; "bless me, colonel! I had no idea you had gone so far."

"Indeed but I had, madam; and now I am about it, may as well confess the truth, for I know you will keep my secret, which I must request, or I could not again face the young lady. When Miss St.

St. Austyn first came hither, as I mean to give him my whole fortune, I thought, if they could like one another, it would be no bad business. I call Heaven to witness that her fortune had no sway with me; I have sufficient for both; herself was the recommendation, and being your niece, increased her value with me, as I knew it would also with Albert. I therefore lost no time, but mentioned it to him. I spoke in her praise; he more than echoed me, but talked of her fortune —meeting a refusal—and in short, I know not what—though I offered to make proposals to you that I trusted would not be refused. He, however, declined all, and I fear I must give up my intention."

"And now, colonel, to deal with equal sincerity, I must tell you, that Mr. Montgomery has acted with more prudence than yourself. His acquaintance with Gertrude is too short, for either to judge decidedly whether the other is calculated to make them happy; Gertrude is yet young,

young, and her character must be more fixed before I should willingly consent to see her married."

"Albert, I am convinced, would make any woman happy," interrupted the colonel, warmly.

"I believe it; and as I can rely on your honour, will not scruple one declaration, which is, that I should not hesitate, had I a daughter, to bestow her on your nephew. But my situation with Gertrude is far more delicate, as her whole fortune depends on my consent. I may advise, if I see her choose imprudently, but will never persuade or recommend any party: I have remarked, among young people, recommendations are seldom of service; beside, to influence any one I regard as dependent on my consent, is an action of all others I would avoid. Be persuaded by me then, sir, and leave your nephew to his own inclination; talk to him no more on the business; and above all, let me en

 treat

treat that our present conversation may never be disclosed."

"No, on my honour and life, it never shall, though it would warm my poor Albert's heart to know your goodness. I yield to your better judgment, I will press the subject no farther; if he marries, it will make me happy; if he declines it, I will endeavour to be satisfied."

"Right, my dear sir; and now let us go and offer a flag of truce: I am convinced that you love your nephew, and feel equally with himself any little difference of opinion that may arise."

With these words Mrs. Stanhope presented her hand to the colonel, who led her to the music-room.

The trio were apparently in high good humour; Marian had taken her place at the harpsichord, and entreated Gertrude to sing a little air she was accustomed to; but there was now a restraint she could not easily overcome, the presence of Montgomery.

gomery. Marian however laughed at her scruples, adding—"Surely you do not mind Albert? If you do, he shall a second time suffer banishment."

"In this case," said Montgomery, "I shall not submit so calmly. In the first instance, I was sentenced by one whose power I had no right to dispute; and Mrs. Stanhope, merciful to my errors, gave me such companions in my exile, as she knew would entirely destroy its effect."

"If this punishment has so little power upon you," replied Marian, "I shall desire my uncle to contrive some more efficacious."

"With all my heart, provided Miss St. Austyn favour us now with the air you mentioned. Surely," said he to Gertrude, humourously adopting Marian's words—"*You do not mind Albert?*"

Gertrude, thus pressed, sung, but not so well as usual; and on the conclusion apologized to Marian, who accompanied her with the harpsichord. Albert, in his turn, both

both sung and played; and thus were the party employed when the colonel and Mrs. Stanhope entered.

"You see, madam, that my anger has no great effect on my nephew."

"It has all the effect you wish it, my dear sir," replied Montgomery, rising, and placing chairs for Mrs. Stanhope and his uncle: "few calamities would oppress me equal to that of deserving your displeasure; but for trifling differences of opinion, I cannot remember them longer than you do."

"Egad, it is true that I never remember them long; your friend too here has been speaking a good word for you, so let what is past be forgotten; die a bachelor if you will, I care not; should I live to be as old as my father, we shall be entertaining companions by a winter's fireside."

"I do not intend to die a bachelor if I can help it," replied Montgomery; "when I can meet with a woman who has a heart to bestow, and good nature enough to bear

with

with such a helpmate, I, with your approbation, will take her by the hand for life. To confess the truth, I have a dash of the romantic in my notions of matrimonial happiness; I have a heart to love sincerely, and will not bate a grain of being as well beloved in return."

"Oh! you unreasonable creature," returned Marian; "can you suppose, that if even a woman had a partiality for you, that she would confess it?"

"I did not stipulate for words," said Albert; "but why should she not? surely there is no shame in virtuous love; and for such a woman I would declare my affection in the face of God and man."

"I have always observed," said the colonel, "that your demure dogs are the most impudent fellows. I honestly confess that, in my youth, my morals in some respects were not so irreproachable as I could now wish; but, hang me, amidst it all, I should never have had face enough to ask a girl to say she loved me."

"Indeed,"

"Indeed," replied Mrs. Stanhope, "you have got into a curious dispute, colonel, and which, I think, will take from your nephew the subject of your reproach."

"Egad, madam, he is a queer compound, yet, take him altogether, I must bear with him, for I know not how to alter him for the better."

"He must therefore remain as he is," replied Mrs. Stanhope; "we will at present adjourn to the tea-table, and afterwards pass the intervening time until supper with music."

CHAP.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Journey to London.

In a few days, as before agreed, the colonel and Marian departed for London—Montgomery remaining at Blackwood, to superintend the business that was yet unfinished. On their arrival in town, Mrs. Mosely's lodgings being empty, they took up their residence with her, as their stay was to be short. The offer of the colonel to Mrs. Mosely, to accompany them home as housekeeper, the good woman accepted with heartfelt satisfaction, as she looked upon such a retreat as an asylum for old age, which was fast creeping upon her.

With the appearance of Miss Southern, both

both Marian and her uncle were interested; her mind, by the care of Mrs. Mosely, had become much calmer, and her person in consequence had improved so greatly, that the colonel, when alone with his niece, said—"Egad! I did not expect the wench was so handsome; and though I believe Albert to be as well, or perhaps better to be trusted than most young fellows, yet I don't hold it prudent to throw temptation in his way. I should be plaguily provoked to have any mischief happen, and confounded angry with him; yet, at his age, I protest I don't think I could have withstood such an adventure."

"My dear sir," answered Marian, "I thought you had a better opinion of Albert; I know his heart, and can answer for——"

"What can you answer for, you little simpleton?" interrupted the colonel; "what do you know of the matter? His heart—why his heart would have nothing

to

to do in the business. What the pies, don't I understand these things better than you?"

This reply completely silenced Marian, which the colonel observing, he added—"Come, never be grave, I love you for your opinion of your brother; but don't think so well of any other man; we are all confounded sly where a pretty girl is concerned; and should any one hereafter win your affections, and not deserve the preference, hang me! as old as I am, if I would not hunt him through the earth like a wild beast."

"Were I to bestow my heart imprudently, your danger, sir, could but increase my punishment; but with the blessing of Heaven, I trust neither you nor I shall be put to the trial."

When Marian mentioned to Betsey Southern her accompanying them into the country, her gratitude knew no bounds; but when she was informed that it was to Miss St. Austyn she had disclosed her whole

whole story, it was a considerable drawback on her pleasure. Marian, however, avoided explanation, leaving her still in error respecting the forgery.

As she became more acquainted with Betsey, she found her mild and unassuming, ready to oblige, and unwearied in shewing her gratitude; she had the more time for these observations, as the colonel was frequently engaged with an old acquaintance he had accidentally met with at his banker's, so that had it not been for the company of Mrs. Mosely and Betsey, she would have been much alone.

One morning, after breakfast, as she was reading the newspaper, she happened casually to express a wish to see a play advertised for that evening. The colonel, ready to gratify her most trivial wishes, desired she would take the present opportunity—"The servant," said he, "shall take places, Mrs. Mosely will accompany you, and by the end of the play I shall be able to join you."

Marian

Marian accepted the proposal; and in the evening, with her friend, went to the theatre, which was much crowded, and the lobby so full, that they found some difficulty in passing. Marian, though no word escaped her, determined never to enter a theatre again without a male protector; for the beauty of her person attracted the attention of the loungers, who, regardless of the confusion they inspired, fixed their glasses on her with unfeeling curiosity, rapping out with fashionable oaths encomiums on her loveliness.

Taking Mrs. Mosely's arm, her eyes fixed on the ground, they had nearly got through the lobby, when an exclamation from one of her tormentors attracted her attention.—"Zounds! St. Austyn," said he, "what are you doing? have you seen the constellation?"

Marian, at the name, involuntarily raised her eyes, and to her great confusion discovered among the party that obstructed their passage, Frederic St. Austyn, in earnest

earnest discourse with a woman of elegant appearance.

As his back was nearly turned towards her, she had hopes she should pass unnoticed, and particularly as he answered the coxcomb that addressed him—" I leave you the benefit of the discovery; I am otherwise engaged." Then conversing for a moment with the lady, whose hand he held, Marian heard her say—" You will not fail?" to which he answered—" The challenge is too delightful to be neglected."

At that moment the crowd pressing, Mrs. Mosely was forced towards them; when Frederic turned his eyes, and met those of Marian. The levity of his manner instantly forsook him—he started, dropped the hand he was apparently pressing, and pushed through the crowd in pursuit of Marian, who had just passed the party that obstructed the way.

Though confused with the remembrance of what had passed between Albert and himself,

himself, yet he was too much interested to suffer her to escape him; and therefore followed them to a box, which he a few moments after entered.—"Pardon this intrusion, Miss Montgomery," said he, "but, with fortune so much my friend, it was impossible to resist the opportunity."

Marian made no reply, but endeavoured to conceal her vexation at the rencontre, by conversing with Mrs. Mosely.

"Will you not deign to speak to me, Miss Montgomery? Surely you will favour me by informing me of the health of my aunt?"

"Mrs. Stanhope was well, sir," returned Marian, coldly, "when I last heard from her."

"*From her!* you astonish me," said Frederic; "may I ask if you have left my aunt, madam?"

"For a short time, sir."

Frederic looked inquisitive, but ventured no further question; the extreme coldness

both

both of Marian's manner and answers precluded all information.

"I did myself the honour, madam," resumed he, after a long pause, "to address a letter to you some time since; would to Heaven my offers had met your approbation!"

"I thank you, sir; my situation is so happy, I do not wish to change it."

"I cannot grieve at your happiness," returned Frederic, in a melancholy accent, "though I may wish I had been suffered to contribute towards it. Unfortunately an error, which I sincerely lament, though I cannot recall it, has rendered me so despicable in your opinion, that nothing can remove the impression."

"Like yourself," replied Marian, somewhat softened by his apparent contrition, "I lament that you should deviate so greatly from what, I flatter myself, is your natural character; but this, on your *own* account—for even *that* event totally obliterated

terated from my memory, Mr. St. Austyn and myself could never be more than friends."

"Why will you say so?" replied Frederic. "If the sincerest contrition, the truest admiration of your virtues, and most unalterable affection, can obliterate my faults, believe them fixed in my heart. I am a young man, Miss Montgomery—errors at my age may not be irretrievable; an unhappy number of unavoidable circumstances have combined to force me to act in a manner repugnant to my feelings. I confess I have not that command over my passions which distinguishes your brother, and sincerely lament the folly and disgrace of our late rencontre."

"*Rencontre!*" repeated Marian with visible alarm, the secrecy she had observed when the colonel and Albert first came to the Vale recurring to her memory. "Can you then have been so cruel as to force Albert to meet you? 'Tis a circumstance he has carefully concealed, even from me.

 Leave

Leave me, sir, leave me, I conjure you; the injuries to myself I forgive, but the wickedness of wishing to deprive me of my nearest friend and protector, I never can forget or pardon."

Frederic, sincerely vexed that he had mentioned the subject, which Marian's emotion convinced him she was before ignorant of, said—"For Heaven's sake suppress your resentment! Hear me; though I cannot exculpate, at least I can palliate my conduct."

"Leave me, leave me, sir," answered she, endeavouring to speak with more calmness. "This disagreeable discourse will attract notice; if you do not instantly go, I will quit the house."

Frederic, finding her peremptory, was necessitated to acquiesce, and rising, said—"Painful as is your command, you shall be obeyed. Ah, Miss Montgomery! I would you could see my heart! My errors are indeed great, but my punishment is equally so."

Thus

Thus speaking he bowed, and left the box, but went no further than the back row in the next, where he at least could see what passed.

Marian then informed Mrs. Mosely with the reasons for her conduct, concluding with saying—"Were it not for my uncle's coming, and that our absence might alarm him, I would immediately return home, for the pleasure of the evening is entirely destroyed."

The drawing up of the curtain prevented more discourse; but as Marian had said the amusement of the evening was totally broken in upon, she was inattentive to all before her; her thoughts reverting to the danger her brother had doubtless escaped, or what in future he might be exposed to—withdrawing her eyes whenever they chanced to glance towards Frederic (who sat between her and the stage), as though they had met a serpent.

Though the house was uncommonly full, Mrs. Mosely had reserved a place for

 the

the colonel, who, at the end of the fourth act, entered the box, and took his seat by the side of Marian, who made him room with apparent satisfaction.—"My dear girl," said he aloud, "my heart has been with you the whole evening; I fear you were incommoded getting in, and condemned myself, since your departure, for trusting you."

The whole of this speech reached the astonished ear of Frederic; Marian's answer was in a low voice, yet the words, *dear sir*, were distinguishable, and stung him to the quick. Yet when he considered the age of the colonel, his jealousy would have subsided, had he not recognized him for the person who attended Albert the morning of their meeting, and whose interference the night before had marked his detestation of Berners' behaviour. Again he recollected his saying that he was a stranger to Albert, but would second so brave a fellow to the last drop of his blood. To complete all, the colonel had

had the appearance of a buck of the last age; and it seemed very improbable that the old gentleman should be on such terms of intimacy with Marian, and yet she be totally uninformed of the meeting that had taken place.

Thus circumstanced, he passed a disagreeable evening; nor was Marian's more pleasing, though the presence of her uncle in some measure reassured her, and she endeavoured to receive his sallies and observations with cheerfulness, until Frederic, unable to bear his vexation, without in some measure shewing it, rose hastily, and left the box, without being seen by the colonel, who, totally engrossed by his niece, scarcely thought of any other object.

Frederic, though he was determined at the moment he left his seat to return instantly home and forget Marian, whose connexion with the colonel he saw in no very favourable point of view, had hardly

 reached

reached the lobby before he blamed his own precipitancy, and resolved at least to keep a watch on her actions for that evening; he therefore returned, but placed himself at a greater distance, and in a situation where he conjectured she could not discover him.

On his reentrance Marian's eyes were fixed on the colonel's face—she was apparently listening to him with a pleasure that redoubled Frederic's torments: after suffering during the whole of the farce, he saw them rise to depart, and determined, if possible, to discover whether her old beau accompanied her home, and where she resided.

At length they left the box, and Frederic, unseen in the crowd, followed to the lobby, where, to his increased vexation, he saw her familiarly hang on the old gentleman, and heard him say, in a loud and peremptory tone, as they reached the door—"I insist on your tying that catskin

catskin closer round your throat, or you will take cold, and I have not time to nurse you while we are in town."

Marian instantly obeyed, by bringing her tippet close to her neck, then again placing her arm under his, when the colonel, to Frederic's still greater amazement, in a loud voice desired Miss Montgomery's servant to be called; and in a few minutes saw an elegant though plain coach draw up, into which, after placing the ladies, he stepped himself.

"Do you see that coach?" said Frederic to one of the linkboys, as it drove off slowly, being impeded by other carriages: "follow, observe where it stops, and every circumstance, then bring me word to the Shakespeare, where I shall wait for you—my name is St. Austyn; be diligent, and I will reward you."

No more was necessary; the lad darted off with speed, followed through thick and thin, never losing sight of the coach until he saw it reach Mrs. Mosely's.

The street and shop being carefully noted, the lad returned to his employer, who was waiting with impatience.

"Well, sir," said he, "I have landed them safe at No. 12, a milliner's shop in Duke-street: I put out my link because I should not be remarked, but lighted it again at an oyster-stand, when I saw them stop, and by good luck got close before they stepped out—'Light, your honour,' says I, as the old gentleman was helping out the eldest lady; and when he gave his hand to the other, I held up my link and saw her face as plain as I do yours; and, 'faith! a sweet face it is, and a good-natured one too; 'tis a thousand pities but a younger man could catch her."

"Catch her!" repeated Frederic, indignantly; but suddenly checking himself on the recollection that the service in which he had employed this lad paved the way to familiarity, he asked, more calmly, if all went into the same house?

"Lauk, sir, I was going to tell you, perhaps

perhaps the young lady was his wife; I'm glad I followed them, I'm sure. He bid me hold down my link, for fear she should slip off the step, and when she was safe, said—'If you have any silver, my love, give this poor fellow a shilling, for I have no change,' which she did in a moment, telling the old gentleman, as they went into the house, that she was glad they had got safe home."

"Enough," returned Frederic, giving him some silver—"I have all the information I want."

For some time after the fellow's departure, Frederic remained lost in thought. That Marian was not married was past all doubt, for the old gentleman called for *Miss* Montgomery's servants; but how came Miss Montgomery to be enabled to keep servants, who had but a few months before been reduced to seek a service, and her brother confined to a prison for a small debt? The new acquaintance too, who behaved, and in return was treated, with

such

such familiarity, appeared in no favourable light; and to complete all, Mrs. Mosely came in for her share of the scandal.

Such were the first thoughts that recurred, but a short reflection appeared to refute them.—"Confusion!" exclaimed he; "it is impossible! have not I offered her the disposal of my fortune, and even to make her my wife on any terms? It is a cursed humiliating reflection, to suppose she can prefer that ugly old rascal to myself. By my soul! Berners' opinion of the sex is just: this old fellow's fortune is doubtless easier than mine; he perhaps means to marry her, and she possibly may prudently consider that her bondage will be of shorter duration, and that such a husband will be more commodious than myself; but where is her brother in all this? Where is his quick sense of honour, to suffer his sister to act thus? He must be equally guilty."

Such were Frederic's vague conjectures; but

but unable to form any that relieved his anxiety, he at length ordered the waiter to call a coach, and returned home.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Torments of Jealousy.

As Berners was not within when Frederic returned, he retired to his apartment; but the perturbation of his spirits banished sleep. He had begun to flatter himself that he had overcome his passion for Marian, but this chance-meeting destroyed the illusion, and, like chaff before the wind, his resolution of forgetting her fled. He turned with disgust from the woman he was addressing with the warmest gallantry, and, regardless of every other object, pursued her, experiencing the most

poignant pangs of jealousy at sight of the colonel, whose intimacy he accounted for in the most infamous manner, for the opinions of Berners could not entirely fail of their impression.

Determined, however, to search the mystery to the bottom, he endeavoured to compose himself, but in vain; every word and action that had struck his ear from either the colonel or Marian, recurred with redoubled acrimony on his mind the more they were reflected upon; even the smile with which she received him, her manner of making him place, trifling as they were, increased his torment.—"*Dear sir!*" exclaimed he, repeating her address to the colonel.—"The depravity of woman is yet greater than I imagined—youth, beauty, and accomplishments, to unite themselves to age, ugliness, and lechery! the thought renders her hateful and disgusting; she is past all shame, or she could not act thus; to hang familiarly on his arm, to suffer him to address her

with

with so much freedom, all evinces their connexion.—'*Tie that catskin closer round your neck—I shall not have time to nurse you.*' Confound him! I wonder, public as the place was, the old goat did not tie it himself. By Heaven! if he had, I believe I should have strangled him upon the spot. Fool that I am, to distract my brain with so worthless an object! I will endeavour to lose the remembrance in sleep."

A calm of some minutes succeeded, when, suddenly starting, he continued—"*Miss Montgomery's servant!* Oh, Marian! how much more lovely were you when you offered yourself as an attendant on my mother! Time *was* when you might have dispossessed me of all my errors, and led me back to rectitude and happiness, and I have preserved you in honour and innocence; but it is too late to reflect—the fate of both is fixed. Yet," continued he, after a long pause, "without vanity, it almost exceeds belief that she should prefer that old fellow. Berners' accursed quar-

rel

rel at the coffee-house doubtless brought Montgomery acquainted with him, for that they were then strangers was apparent. Her brother appears a man of rigid honour —and can he submit to this? After all, surely I must mistake; eyes, ears, all conspire to deceive me—she *cannot* be his mistress! yet it must be through him that her situation is so much changed. Probably he means to marry her—but he shall first cut his way through my heart to the altar."

Overpowered at length with his own violence, a calmer state of mind succeeded, and he sincerely repented the not having again written to Gertrude—an omission that, however, he resolved to rectify in the ensuing morning.

Frederic arose, with his spirits calmed, but unrecruited by rest, and, to Berners' pressing entreaties, at length disclosed the meeting of the night before.

He listened to the account with more pleasure than amazement, as it coincided with

with his opinion of women.—" You will surely now have no compunction," said he; "I knew from the first that her conduct was merely art, to enhance her value."

Though Frederic, influenced by jealousy, at first gave somewhat into this sentiment, yet it was preponderated by so many strong circumstances, that reflection made him waver.—" Were she what in honour I could call my wife," said he, " there is nothing even yet that I would not attempt to gain her; but as it is, my word shall bind me—I give her up for ever."

" Heroically resolved! and so let the old fellow triumph? No, though I sincerely wish the girl had been snugly lying by the side of her great-grandmother before ever you saw her, for I am convinced the remembrance of her embitters all your pleasures, yet, now to be foiled by an old fellow! to stand by calmly, and let him bear off the prize for which you languish—forbid it, honour! and forbid it, love!"

" Leave honour out of the question," said

said Frederic; "supposing me even inclined to follow your advice, I cannot conceive it possible, for I am convinced, that even the sight of a serpent is not so hateful to her as my presence."

"Ridiculous!" replied Berners; "is it in nature to suppose that she can prefer an old ugly fellow to a young handsome one? But you say she is at the milliner Mosely's; I will therefore endeavour to make some inquiries respecting her this morning."

"For Heaven's sake, refrain!" replied Frederic. "I dread your farther interference; I know your friendship for me would lead you any length; but, after what has passed between myself and Montgomery, I hold myself bound in honour, and cannot bear the reflection of a renewal of insult. I mean this day to write to Gertrude; Mrs. Stanhope surely cannot so far influence her as to break off all correspondence with her brother. I will slightly mention having seen Miss Montgomery,

gomery, which may lead to some reply that may develop her present situation."

Writing to either his aunt or Gertrude was what Berners dreaded; yet it was impossible to make any objection, without appearing particular; he therefore determined to remain at home, and take measures to get the letter into his possession: this was effected without difficulty, for in the course of the morning, Frederic having written, left his letter, with orders to be sent to the post, and went to take his usual ride—an opportunity Berners did not fail to profit by, telling the servant he would put it in with one of his own.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XV.

Inquiries.

ACTIVE as Berners appeared to serve his pupil in his illicit pleasures, his gratification in regard to Marian was now but a secondary cause; to satisfy at once his own revenge on her and her brother, was at present the principal object. That he feared Montgomery more than he chose to allow even to himself, was true; and as he could not conquer him by bodily strength, to stab him through the honour of his sister appeared so complete a revenge, that Berners would not have hesitated venturing his life to accomplish it. To reconnoitre, or make inquiries by daylight, in the street where she dwelt, did not

not appear prudent; but, in the evening, Frederic declaring he would again go to the play, he pleaded a prior engagement, and resolved to begin his machinations.

He walked up and down the street where Mrs. Mosely lived, for two or three times, without making any observation; for her shop and house, though at an early hour, were close shut. At length espying a card against a door nearly opposite, he resolved to try whether any information was to be obtained by that means, and knocking, a servant girl soon appeared, to ask his commands.

Apologizing for calling so late, he requested to see the lodgings, when an elderly woman immediately made her appearance from the parlour; and, if any judgment is to be gained from dress and person, hers was all that Berners could have wished. Coarse, very fat and unwieldy, her vulgarity was rendered more conspicuous by the preposterous manner in which she had decorated herself, the

blazing

blazing crimson ribands that bedecked her head forming but a lighter shade to contrast the fiery red of her countenance. It has been observed, that Berners' appearance was calculated to please, and the effect did not appear lost on the landlady, who, with a profusion of words, and almost as many curtsies, led the way to the first floor.

Berners knew too much of the world, not to be almost assured that he had met such a character as he could have desired, and the price was asked, agreed on, and two guineas thrown down as earnest in a few minutes.—"And now, madam," said he, "I must inform you, that the apartments are not for myself, but a young lady, whom I expect out of the country in the course of a few days, or it may happen to be a month; but that shall make no difference in our agreement—I would wish to place her with a gentlewoman of your prepossessing appearance."

Berners fixed his eyes stedfastly upon her

her while he spoke, and was perfectly satisfied to meet no objection at receiving a lady unrecommended, but by an unknown and gay young fellow.—"The lady," resumed he, "is perfectly respectable, as you will find; but I hope you have a reputable neighbourhood—she would wish to be private. What shop is that I observe opposite to you?"

The landlady, who doubtless, from Berners' appearance and manner, expected an intrigue of the first-rate consequence, replied—"A milliner's—a woman that I cannot say I much like, but she has nothing to do with me, though she was once busy enough to scandalize some young ladies in my house; since which I have had Venetian blinds to all my windows, for I detest to be overlooked: every gentleman or lady's apartment is their castle, as I says to my maid; and as long as they behave decorously, and as gentlefolks should, I am never impudent enough to pry into their business. Let every one look

look at home, as I says to Molly, and they'll find enough to do—at least I can for one, and so may they."

"Very justly and sensibly observed, my dear madam; every one has not your understanding. Your neighbour doubtless has no lodgers, or she would know the world better."

"As to that," replied she, "she knows the world well enough; but she is one of your demure sort, and admits nothing into her house but brothers and sisters, uncles and nieces."

"A very provident lady! pray has she any of those relations with her now?"

"Oh yes! and a curious story it is—my maid and hers are first cousins; but that she knows nothing about: so when I sends my Molly to market, the wenches sometimes meet, and have a gossip. She need not hold her head so high, for she is as poor as Job, every body says; and though she turns up her nose at me and my house, I'd have her to know, that

though

though I am a lone woman, I can buy her any day of the week. My poor dear husband, God rest his soul! kept the King's Arms Hotel; and though he would drink a cup too much, and sometimes kick up a riot, he was a kind heart in the main."

Berners felt himself perfectly at ease by this declaration.—" But, my dear madam," said he, " you were going to tell me some droll story respecting your neighbour."

" So I was.—' Molly,' says I, ' I knows a thing or two; that girl's no more his niece than I am; but I beg your pardon —as my poor husband used to say, I often begins in the middle of a story. Well then, some months ago, one morning, as I was looking through my window, I see mother Mosely come home in a hackney coach, with a young handsome girl, in deep mourning. I am sure she was in great distress, for she was continually in the upper floor, working and crying. But I should tell you, Molly's cousin did not live

live there then, or I should have known more of the matter. At last comes a young fellow—her brother, they said, and please you, and all the sorrow vanished—she was as merry as a grig. By-and-by I lost them both, and saw nothing more of either till the other day, when as handsome a coach as you would wish to see stops at the door, and out steps Miss, with an old fellow, who, they say, is her uncle."

"Relationship is a very convenient cover," said Berners; "but your maid's cousin must be the best judge whether it is really so."

"Lord! she's a poor ignoramus, and knows nothing but what's beat into her head. Why the old fellow hardly ever goes out, or comes in, but he kisses her, and bids her take care of herself. Pray, when did you ever know uncles so fond? I'm sure I was brought up with one, and so far from kissing me, he used to kick and beat me black and blue."

"He

"He was unworthy such a relation," said Berners; "but have the uncle and niece separate apartments?"

"Oh, to be sure! she's cunning enough. Molly's cousin wont believe but what they are relations; if they are not, she says she is sure the old man would marry her any day."

Berners asked the name of the parties, and being informed, pretended to recollect them, and desired his officious landlady to make all the inquiry in her power. He then took leave, not forgetting to present Molly with half-a-guinea, as she let him out.

Berners returned home, much sooner than his usual hour, and waited in anxious expectation until Frederic came from the play. He had in vain sought both houses—Marian was not at either. Wearied and spiritless, he threw himself into a chair, and remained silent until Berners began to relate his discoveries.

"Her uncle, do you say?" interrupted Frederic.

Frederic. "That surely is impossible; for it is certain Montgomery and himself were strangers until that accursed quarrel at the coffeehouse."

"He is at least as much her uncle as Montgomery is her brother, I firmly believe," replied Berners.

"That Montgomery *is* really her brother, I will pledge my life!" said Frederic.

"What, from his own words?" returned Berners, ironically.

"Not only from his own words, but from *unanswerable, undeniable* evidence."

"What *secret* reasons you may have to affirm it, I cannot tell," said Berners; "but that their relationship is all a farce, is not only my opinion, but that of others."

"I cannot enter into it now," said St. Austyn; "but I am convinced of its truth. What this new uncle may be, I have my doubts, and which, had I worlds, I would give to have satisfied. To write

to

to her I know would be useless—my letter would be returned unopened."

"By my soul! you are infatuated to this girl, and yet want the resolution to get her into your power."

This conversation continued until they retired for the night; Berners dissatisfied that he could not urge the temper of St. Austyn to some daring act, and Frederic discontented with all around him, and yet more so with himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

A sudden Resolution—Perseverance.

FREDERIC again passed a disordered night, and the perturbation of his mind had so far impaired his health, that in the morning he was unable to leave his apartment. He however refused, even to obstinacy, Berners' request to call in a physician; for justly could he have asked, with Macbeth,

"Canst thou minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart?"

For

For three days St. Austyn remained confined; but on the fourth, though pale and languid, he came down in the morning. The quiet of a sick chamber had produced his usual self-accusation, and the same resolution of amendment, with this difference, that his former fits of contrition were ever attended with a violence that exhausted itself; the present determination was more calm, and rather tinctured with melancholy than passion; and having breakfasted, Berners was not a little surprised to hear him desire the servant to call in all his bills in the course of a day or two.

On the departure of the man, Berners expressed his surprise, saying, that he knew payment at the present would be far from convenient.—"And I have been thinking," continued he, "that as there are some leases of considerable farms ready to fall in, you might raise a good sum that way, as they are greatly underlet."

"I will not advance them a pound," returned

returned Frederic; "it would be highly unjust to make their holders pay for my extravagance; *I* only have been to blame, and *I* alone have a right to suffer."

Berners, who regarded this as no more than one of those retrospections to which St. Austyn was subject, made little reply; but soon after asked him gaily, what he thought of a party to his country-house?—"The air," said he, "will be of service, and lively company pass off those vapours that oppress you."

"I cannot accompany you," replied Frederic; "but I have writings and papers there which may oblige me to go in a day or two."

Berners finding his melancholy not likely to decrease, soon after left him.

St. Austyn, for some time after his departure, remained lost in thought; at length he exclaimed—"I resolve to abjure my vices when they have robbed me of every friend, except the partner of them. Poor Berners! for the happi-

ness

ness of both it is necessary to part. Yet he shall not find me ungrateful: but our pursuits must hereafter be different; in the way most suited to his inclination may he find happiness! Happiness *I* do not expect; but it is not in dissipation I shall even enjoy quiet; if I have lost the esteem of every one, at least I will endeavour to regain my own."

He then went out, and calling on his solicitor, entreated him to procure a reputable person to advance him a sum of money, for which he would encumber his estate.

The solicitor finding him peremptory, accompanied him immediately to a friend of his own, who, after the necessary preliminaries, agreed to advance the sum of six thousand pounds; for the payment of which, with interest, Frederic made over the rents of his estate for three years, reserving to himself five hundred pounds yearly.

This business agreed upon, he return-

ed home, and, Berners being engaged, dined alone. Accustomed to company, this solitude was not pleasant, and with difficulty he restrained himself from ordering the chariot to take him to the play.—"I will conquer this folly," said he, "or die in the struggle; why should I court pain? I will, if possible, never see her more; for never can I meet her with indifference."

During the evening he endeavoured to arrange his accounts; but neither his head nor mind was calm enough for that effort; and a few lines, enclosing a draft for a hundred guineas, to his *fair friend*, telling her they must meet no more, was the labour of the evening until Berners returned, and who having drank more wine than makes man a rational companion, they soon retired to their respective apartments.

For two days St. Austyn was out during the whole morning, and alone the remainder of the day; for Berners could not

not resolve to relinquish his engagements, and was also completely vexed to see the reflective humour of his pupil continue. Frederic's uneasiness was likewise increased by receiving no reply to the letter he had written to Gertrude; for, not doubting but that it had reached her, he could only attribute her silence to a positive command from Mrs. Stanhope.

CHAPTER XVII.

A new Arrangement.

Berners did not rise the following morning till late, when he was informed that Frederic had been out ever since six o'clock. On entering the breakfast-parlour, the first object that struck him was a packet directed to himself in St. Austyn's hand. Astonished, he tore it open, and read as follows:—

"My dear Friend,

"My abrupt departure I think you will excuse, when I say that I could not summon courage to declare that we must part; a thousand kind remembrances

brances would have arisen, and made me wish perhaps to relinquish a resolution, which I had rather perish than infringe upon. You have seen enough to be assured that it is not in the riot of dissipation that my heart can ever regain its serenity; I am therefore resolved to try the effect of retirement and quiet. But as I know you approve, and are formed for the bustle of life, and have frequently wished for a commission in the army, I have exerted my little power to procure you the enclosed, convinced that you will fill it with credit; and which I flatter myself you will accept as a testimonial of my affection. I have now, my dear Berners, to request, that as you value my happiness, you do not endeavour to win me from my purpose; it would be unavailing, and only tend to disunite a friendship, which I hope death alone will terminate. You may judge of the strength of the resolution I have formed, by my

forcing myself from London when I knew Miss Montgomery was there, and that even without further inquiry; for, convinced that I could not learn any thing that would tend towards bringing back peace to my heart, I determined, let it cost me however dear, to snatch myself from it. If she is virtuous, she will never be any thing to me; if otherwise, she *never shall.* My word was passed to her brother; and so prosper me, Heaven, as I mean to keep it! I shall remain at Kew for a few days, until I have finished the settlement of my affairs, which are in a state of intricacy that distracts my head; if, therefore, you have an hour to spare (remember the conditions), I shall be happy to embrace the only friend wayward fate has left.

"F. St. Austyn.

"P. S.—Should there be any letters, I shall esteem it a favour if you will enclose

close them immediately. That Gertrude should not answer mine, both surprises and vexes me."

The various emotions that actuated Berners during the perusal of this epistle are easier to be felt than described. It has already been observed, that if he had a predilection for any one, it was for Frederic. Heretofore he had led him at pleasure; but now, rousing the dormant faculties of his reason, he had taken the only step that could effectually restore him to honour and respectability.

Berners at once saw that this resolution must place an insuperable bar between them, as his arts respecting Gertrude, and the consequent meanness it had made him commit, must unavoidably be discovered. The commission too puzzled him, as he was convinced St. Austyn must have increased his difficulties to procure it; and that he should take

steps

steps of such consequence without consulting him, shewed an independence of spirit that he did not expect. At first he resolved to send it back; but a few minutes put that idea to flight, as a situation in the army presented at once a consequence and independence above his expectations. Notwithstanding, he resolved to leave no means untried to bring back St. Austyn to the path he had quitted, and, by plunging him yet deeper in error, to render him the less susceptible of the villany of his own conduct.

He immediately called for his horse, and soon reached Kew, where he found St. Austyn surrounded with papers. Entering with his usual cheerfulness, he began singing—"*If you turn Monk, I'll turn Friar,*' &c. and, by my soul! that will be an excellent amendment to your scheme. How often have I envied those happy fellows who enjoy the unlimited confidence of the young and beautiful! Let me indulge the thought," continued

he:

he: "methinks I see myself seated in the confessional, glancing aside from under my cowl, at a blooming creature kneeling at my feet. Oh! I could never bear it; I should raise her in my arms—seal my benediction on her lips, with a kiss of peace, and obliterate all her errors in a moment."

"I rather think," said Frederic, "that you would add to them. Your spirits, Berners, are an inexhaustible fund, for which I could almost envy you."

"Would I could at least communicate a sufficient quantity to preserve you from those fits of the spleen that embitter your life! But to business; for that brought me hither. I feel your generosity; but if it is only to be purchased at the expence of your friendship, I relinquish it."

"But why," said St. Austyn, "at the expence of my friendship? I have long been sensible, my dear Berners, that our tempers were widely different. You are sprightly, and love the bustle of the world;

world; I am dull, and it, on the contrary, disgusts and fatigues me. From the first of our acquaintance I have loved you, nor has time lessened that attachment. Your pursuits I have adopted, and your inclinations have become mine; but education and nature have ever been at variance. *I* rushed into pleasures without enjoying them, and lavished my fortune without satisfaction. Inclination and necessity now make me resolve to adopt the opposite extreme. If it fails, I can but return to the life I have quitted; if it succeeds, my end is answered."

Berners attempted to speak, but St. Austyn prevented him.

"A few words more, and I have done. Do not accuse me with want of friendship; tax it to the highest of my ability—it shall not shrink; but suffer me to have an independent will. For you to adopt the life I mean to pursue is impossible; it is equally so for me to continue that I have led some time past; neither my constitution,

stitution, fortune, or inclination, can sustain it. Let us therefore endeavour to be happy each in his own way, and in spite of the difference of pursuits, preserve our ancient friendship inviolate. Seek not therefore to move me from my purpose; your persuasions may give me pain, but cannot change it."

"I shall not endeavour it," replied Berners with visible pique; "I have many obligations to you, Mr. St. Austyn, and can only grieve that the contracted state of my finances prevents my discharging them."

"You are unkind as well as unjust," said Frederic. "Have I not considered you as a brother, and should so paltry a consideration come between us?"

"'Tis alone that accursed Marian that has made this alteration," answered he. "Give me but the word, and I here pledge my life to devise some means to put her into your power. I can know every manœuvre from the servant of the house, by means

means of the old cat that lives opposite; and if I do not seize some favourable opportunity, stigmatize me for a fool."

"I have often told you," replied Frederic, "that I would rather perish, than submit to such a ridiculous attempt. Were even chance to throw her into my power, you surely cannot think me wretch sufficient to profit by it; and even supposing her as complaisant as you have sometimes represented, believe me, I should be equally as dissatisfied as at present. You will perhaps laugh when I declare, that my affection for Miss Montgomery is so pure, that I cannot bear the reflection of unchastity to mingle with it. This mysterious uncle, I think, has done more towards conquering my passion, than years of stubborn virtue could have accomplished."

"By my life! such love to me is a paradox, nor can I comprehend it."

"I believe it; but does it not prove that our tempers are totally different? You,

You, I have no doubt, will find rank and satisfaction in a state to which you are attached, and to which your spirit and pleasant disposition cannot fail to lead you. The utmost I aspire to is quiet and independence."

"Surely, however, it is no infringement on your plan, to ask how, or rather where, you intend to put this plan in effect?"

"You have asked a question that I can scarcely answer," returned St. Austyn; "but say that you unconditionally accept the small tribute of my friendship that I left this morning, and as far as I can, I will inform you."

Berners held out his hand, and received the friendly pressure of St. Austyn without a blush.

"I propose then, at least such is my present intention, to visit the Continent; and if I find any pleasant asylum, perhaps to fix there for the ensuing three years, as I have engaged my estate for that period

to

to liquidate my debts, reserving only five hundred pounds yearly; the greater part of which will necessarily be employed in the support of the old servants at the manor-house, for never shall my folly reduce those whose strength and youth were expended in the service of my parents, to seek in their old age a fresh master; it is a mere act of justice to pay the debt due to their grey hairs."

"And can you suppose, accustomed as you have been to all the comforts of life, that you can subsist, and even travel, with such a sum?"

"Very possible," answered Frederic. "Have I not youth, health, and strength; and are we not assured, from numberless daily examples, that the necessaries of life are to be procured at a much easier rate? My carriages and horses will be sold after my departure, and my new servants discharged. This arrangement, you will clearly see, must cut off all ideas of profusion; it will also point out to you the

necessity

necessity of my giving up Miss Montgomery. No wife *shall* share my poverty—no mistress *will* share it."

Berners' wish to bring back St. Austyn to a life of dissipation was greatly lessened when he found the means were gone, for he well knew it was not to be supported without money; inwardly, therefore, reprobating the step he had taken, and his weakness in retrenching himself to pay his debts, he took leave, saying he should visit him again in a day or two.

As Berners rode home, and reflected on what had passed, he clearly saw that all friendship must soon be at an end with Frederic, as it was now impossible to intercept his letters; hope however remained, that, as he proposed immediately going abroad, an explanation might be avoided.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A whimsical Meeting—Doubts removed.

MARIAN, the night she returned from the play after meeting St. Austyn, recalled to her memory every word that had passed between them. The sudden change of his manner, from lively to extreme seriousness, was not lost upon her; but doubly prejudiced against him, from learning that he had actually *met* her brother, though she did not know the particulars, and likewise from the part Mrs. Stanhope supposed him to have in Berners' duplicity, every favourable idea was suddenly crushed; she dreaded being the occasion of fresh dispute, and resolved not to mention having seen him, until she had first consulted

sulted, Mrs. Stanhope—a request she also made to Mrs. Mosely.

The whole of their business was now completed, and Marian looked forward to their return into Dorsetshire with pleasure, and some degree of impatience; for the colonel's engagements with his old friend had already protracted their stay much longer than was intended. It was not, however, possible for her even to declare her wishes in this case, for she knew their weight with her uncle, and could not endure the idea of hastening him away from an act in which his own satisfaction was so much concerned.

His friend, captain Vansitart, had been his school-fellow and companion when he first entered the army, and for many years a friendship had subsisted between them, until the colonel going abroad, and both growing in years, a correspondence had been neglected. But this meeting, which was accidental, recalled all their former intimacy, nor would Vansitart rest until the

the colonel promised to dine with him as frequently as possible before he returned to the country. This request was the more inconvenient, as the captain resided near Richmond, and was unable to return any visit, being disabled with the gout, his journey to town the day he met the colonel being unavoidable, in respect to some pecuniary matters. A similarity of character made this meeting doubly pleasing to both, as they could undisturbed, after dinner, take a cheerful glass, fight over again their old battles, besiege towns, and slay enemies, with all the energy of their youthful days.

It was now Monday, and the ensuing Wednesday was fixed for their departure; the colonel therefore resolved to gratify his old friend by passing the intervening day with him, and accordingly set off at an early hour on horseback, attended by his servant. At dinner he happened to recollect some business he had neglected to transact, and immediately resolved to dispatch

dispatch his man to town to rectify the omission, concluding his message by telling him it was needless to return, as he would ride home unattended.

This business settled, and dinner over, the veterans pledged each other till it began to grow late, and a number of interesting subjects protracted the colonel's departure, until at length the rising of the moon warned him it was time for him to have reached London, instead of setting out for that purpose. Taking leave therefore of his friend, he rode cheerfully forward, though somewhat warmed with wine, until he reached the road leading to Turnham Green, when his horse stumbling unexpectedly, threw him on his head in the midst of the road, and set off full gallop.

Though he was not materially hurt, he was stunned, and lay some time unable to rise, in which state a waggon had inevitably passed over him (as the driver was behind, and his companion asleep on the

load),

load), had not a horseman, by the light of the moon, perceived him, and spurring forward, luckily laid hold of the leading horse, calling at the same time, in a loud and commanding tone, to know the reason of the neglect.

Alarmed at the accident that had nearly happened, the fellows were ready to make any submission, when the gentleman, giving his horse to one of them, raised the colonel, whose nose beginning to bleed, he immediately recovered, and clapping his hand to his bare head, exclaimed—"Zounds, I have lost my hat and wig! Confound that fellow's old port! If it had not been for the battle of Minden, I should have been home two hours ago. I have had a devilish rap on the head, that's certain; but I have recollection enough to know, that had it not been for some one, it might have been much worse."

The waggoner's excuses soon let the colonel into the whole business, and turning to his preserver, he entreated him to give him

him his arm, and accompany him a few minutes to the Star Inn, while the men sought for his hat and wig, and endeavoured to regain his horse.

The gentleman complied, and being shewn an apartment, the colonel, having cleaned his face from the dirt and blood, prepared to return thanks, but had scarcely raised his eyes, when he exclaimed—"Can I believe my sight? Surely it is St. Austyn."

"Yes, sir," replied Frederic, with affected calmness, "it is St. Austyn. What is there so surprising in that? Even the *uncle* of Miss Montgomery is welcome to claim from him a mere service of humanity."

"And why the devil should not Miss Montgomery's uncle claim it as well as another man? I should like to know. Is he not composed of the same stuff? The old-fashioned materials of flesh and blood, even you bucks can't do without for the souls of you; and if there is any partiality

for relationship, you ought to have some for me, for I fancy you was confoundedly in love with my niece, when it carried you so far as to offer matrimony."

"Your niece!" repeated Frederic ironically.

"What tantrum bites now? Sure you knew that? all the world knows it. Egad, I'm so proud both of Albert and her, that I am for ever sounding my trumpet before them!"

"Does the acquaintance of a night constitute relationship, or accompanying a man in a duel adopt him?" said Frederic.

"Yes, sir, sometimes; as in our case, uncles spring up in coffeehouses, like mushrooms in a hotbed, and nieces like angels in the form of chambermaids. Ay, St. Austyn! that was the shape in which you was caught, was it not?"

"I am not inclined to joke, sir," said St. Austyn; "I rejoice you have received no injury, and wish you a good-night."

"Nay, nay, we must not part so," returned

turned the colonel. "I wish to do you a good office in spite of you; for you have done me *two* of the best turns I ever received from any person in my whole life."

"I confess they are past my comprehension," answered Frederic; "but if you allude to this night, let it be expunged, as I repeat, it was a service that even Miss Montgomery's *uncle* was welcome to."

"Miss Montgomery's uncle again! Why, what the pies ails Miss Montgomery's uncle, that you look at him as if you would eat him without sauce or salt? Come, come, St. Austyn, you have no reason to be so glum with me, for your aunt knows nothing of the fighting-match. Egad, I could not get Albert there, till I pledged my honour not to mention it."

"His forbearance is more mortifying than the avowal," said Frederic surprised; "it was a day I shall ever think of with shame and detestation."

"It was a day on which I shall ever sing Te Deum," replied the colonel—"a day

day in which you, or rather your friend, brought me acquainted with my nephew, which is an obligation I will ever avow. The next is nearly as great. In all probability, had it not been for you to-night, I had been a dead man; and as my will is unsigned, an estate of sixteen hundred per year would have gone to another branch of my family instead of Albert; in which case I should never have rested in my grave."

St. Austyn looked at him with amazement; like Montgomery, he almost thought him distracted, while the colonel continued—"Please God I get safe to town this night, it shall however be completed. I sent my man to tell my solicitor I would call in the course of the evening; and now, St. Austyn, as I owe you this obligation, you may as well add another to it, and accompany me to witness the deed."

St. Austyn felt staggered.

"I am

"I am astonished," said he—"I scarcely know what I say; but how is it possible that you can be Miss Montgomery's uncle?"

"Zounds, I believe you are distracted, or that a spell is laid upon you, to repeat nothing but *Miss Montgomery's uncle!* Why, if you don't believe I am her uncle, who the devil will you please to have me? The Emperor of Morocco, the Cham of Tartary, or the Man in the Moon? 'Tis a cursed hard thing that a man cannot be uncle to his own sister's children, without all this fuss."

"I beg pardon, but—"

"Well, well, say no more about it; if you will accompany me to town, I will tell you more as we go along, for I suppose I must take a chaise. I begin to think the time long;, for that gipsy Marian will be fretting and stewing, and sending the fellows after me, if she finds out I am alone. Besides, St. Austyn, I want to carry home good news. We set

set off for Dorsetshire to-morrow; your aunt, I am sure, still loves you; and for that sweet girl Gertrude, you are never mentioned, but a tear follows the name."

"Merciful Heaven! in what a labyrinth have I then been wandering!—But you are mistaken in respect to Mrs. Stanhope; she even prevents Gertrude writing to me."

"Were my own brother to affirm *that*, he is a liar," replied the colonel:—"nay, never look big, nor bluster; some mistake must have happened; Mrs. Stanhope is incapable of falsehood, and she lamented before me, not hearing from you, in regard to some very particular letters herself and Miss St. Austyn had written; but what the contents were, I do not know."

"I have never received a line, and therefore hold it impossible," said St. Austyn, with assumed calmness: "Had one failed, all could not."

"I remember once, when I was much your age," answered the colonel, "a favourite

vourite sultana of mine made very free with some of my papers. Yours might do the same; and if she has, treat her as I did; wish her a good-day, shew her the door, and send her trumpery after her."

"I never put it into the power of my sultanas to serve me a trick of that kind," said Frederic.

"Perhaps not," returned the colonel: "But what have you done with *Fine Bones?* I hope he has broke his neck; for then, to use Albert's words, you will, I doubt not, be all your family could wish."

"I should esteem it a favour if Mr. Montgomery would not trouble himself to form any opinion respecting me," said St. Austyn haughtily.

"Sir, you ought, on the contrary, to be obliged to him. Egad! I have heard him speak so kindly of you to Mrs. Stanhope, that I have stared with astonishment, knowing what had passed; but he lays all, as I said before, to *Fine Bones*."

"You

"You will oblige me, if you mention my friends, to speak more respectfully of them," said Frederic.

"Egad! and so I will where they deserve it. There's your aunt now, she is an angel both in form and mind; and though the spring and summer of her days are past, who can regret it, when blessed with so rich an autumn? Then there's your sister, a blooming little cherub—spring in all its glory; I know but one to compare with her, and that's Marian, and, 'faith! I know not which bears the bell."

At that moment the waiter entered with the colonel's hat and wig; but the horse not being caught, he ordered a chaise, and again pressed St. Austyn to accompany him.

To contend with such a character, Frederic saw was unavailing, and to quarrel with him ridiculous; he likewise was impatient to learn all he could respecting Montgomery and his sister: he therefore

sent

sent home his horse, with a message that he should not return that night, and took his place in the chaise by the colonel.

CHAPTER XIX.

An old Enemy converted into a new Friend.

THEY were hardly seated before St. Austyn's curiosity again led to some explanation, though he had scarce any doubt remaining of the truth of what he had heard, particularly as it appeared sanctioned by Mrs. Stanhope.

"You will excuse my rudeness of this night," said he, "when you recollect, the evening that we first met, you said you had never seen Mr. Montgomery before."

"And I said true. I arrived in London

don

don only the preceding day, and was in search of him and his sister. I had been disappointed of finding him according to an address my sister sent me in a letter from her deathbed, and only entered the coffeehouse to beguile my vexation, and was resolving on the route I should take the ensuing morning, when *Fine Bones* threw the wine, and uttered the name of Montgomery. Egad! I pricked up my ears, and was not a little pleased with him. But, as chance had thus brought about a meeting, I was resolved, if possible, to see the end of the adventure; and, by questions, being entirely satisfied of his identity, without discovering myself, I offered to accompany him in the morning."

"And is it possible that even *then* he was unacquainted with your relationship?" said St. Austyn confusedly.

"He was. The scene going home was worth all that had passed before. He, first of all, treated me as if I was crazy-headed, until

until I worked him up into such a rage, by not placing my words exactly as he liked respecting his father and sister, that, egad! if I had not been in as great a one, and let out the secret in my passion, I verily believe he would have had a brush with me. The discovery calmed my gentleman at once; but the devil of submission did he make: we were however the best friends in the world, and so I doubt not we shall ever continue. I made him leave the banker's, where your aunt's goodness had placed him, that very day, and soon after set off post to Dorsetshire to see Marian; but the plague a bit could I stir him till I pledged my honour to conceal what had passed between you."

Frederic felt the blood mount in his cheeks, but remained silent, and the colonel continued—"When we reached your aunt's, the second scene was as good as the first. Marian was out, and Mrs. Stanhope, at my request, introduced me as a stranger; but whether the cut of my

my face did not please her, or my manners were not to her liking, I cannot say, but she looked at me as askant as a young wench at an old lover. However, I set all right there, and have since purchased the estate at Blackwood for Albert. Marian still resides with your aunt and sister; but we may scarcely be said to be two families, as a day seldom passes but part of it is spent together."

An involuntary but heavy sigh escaped St. Austyn.

"What the pies do you sigh for?" said the colonel. "Though it has cost me a good rap on the pate, I'm heartily glad we met. Let all old grievances be forgotten. The obligations we owe Mrs. Stanhope may well obliterate such trifles. Beside, do I not owe you my life? and I have the vanity to think Albert will readily allow the obligation."

"For Heaven's sake, do not mention as such a mere act of humanity! I am grieved at the affront Miss Montgomery experienced

experienced on my account; but," continued he, sighing, "I must say it has been expiated. To Mr. Montgomery I can make no concession; he has fully avenged himself in a manner never to be obliterated or forgotten."

"Pish, pish, it shall be forgotten! Why, he honestly confessed to me, that the night before your meeting was the most uneasy he ever passed in his life, until he came to the resolution of acting as he did. —'Should I,' said he, 'have wounded Mrs. Stanhope's nephew, however it might have been palliated by the word *honour*, I should have felt myself a villain. She loves him almost as a son, and shall I stab her quiet, though he has been guilty of some errors towards me—*me* whom she rescued from the horrors of a prison, and whose sister she protected, and treats with distinguished kindness?'"

Frederic's head sunk on his bosom, and tears involuntarily dropped from his eyes.

"Spare

"Spare me!" said he, scarcely articulate, "spare me! the remembrance is too painful."

"What the pies, then, do you begin to talk of Albert for? Why, he's my hobby-horse, and set me off, I could go on from June to January. But I have much to say to you respecting yourself. First tell me, where's *Fine Bones?*"

"I cannot reply to your questions while you speak of my friend in so derogatory a manner."

"Well then," returned the colonel, "where's Berners? for I think that's his name—I will not call him your friend, whether you tell me or not."

"Mr. Berners has entered the army. I myself think of going abroad for some time."

"What, and leaving him behind?" asked the colonel.

"The duties of his profession will require his presence at home."

The

The colonel gave a loud huzza, and snatching his hand, shook it heartily.

"Look you, St. Austyn," said he, "one of the most ardent wishes of my heart is to shew my gratitude to your aunt. She protected my sister's children when they had no friend to succour them—Albert in a prison, and Marian reduced to seek a service. Let me in return enjoy the satisfaction of presenting her a nephew restored to himself and her wishes."

St. Austyn pressed the colonel's hand, but remained silent.

"Come, come," said he, "you may feel a little awkward or so at the first meeting; but I know she loves you, and has suffered uneasiness on your account, though the greatness of her spirit causes her to conceal it. Once reconciled, we shall be as happy as kings, and rejoice all the day long."

"I shall never rejoice more," said Frederic.

"Pshaw!" returned the colonel, "why, what, do you think, because you have not exactly

exactly walked the straight line, that you are to be cast off? No such thing. For my part, I must pluck the beam out of my own eye before I can seek after the mote in yours. I hope I am an honest fellow, St. Austyn; nay, I feel more satisfied with myself since I have done my duty by my sister's children: yet, believe me, I was a sorry chap in my youth, and where you have one fault, I dare say I had twenty."

Such discourse, with little variation, brought them to town; where the colonel ordering a porter, sent a message to Marian, that he was returned, but could not be at home till late, as he had unavoidable business.

On reaching the lawyer's, the colonel introduced his companion as one of his witnesses; and the preamble being read, St. Austyn was not a little astonished to hear as follows:

"To my dear nephew, Albert Montgomery, son of my sister Marian, wife of

of Albert Montgomery, I bequeath the whole of my estates, wheresoever and whatsoever, together with the whole of my ready money in the funds or elsewhere, to the amount of forty thousand pounds; subject only to the payment of twelve thousand pounds to my niece, his sister, Marian Montgomery, on her marriage, or attaining the age of twenty-one."

"And now," said the colonel, having signed his name, "there's an act of justice done, and I can sleep in security. Believe me, St. Austyn, I never look at that boy and girl without my heart glowing with thankfulness to Heaven for the gift. I have been forty years in the army, and perhaps may have failed in the established *etiquette* of many points of duty; but a soldier's life, though a life of honour, is subject to so many vicissitudes, that he has not time to think of religion like another man; for, no sooner, perhaps, does he kneel to say his prayers, than the trumpet sounds to arms; and how can he talk of forgiving his enemies,

mies, when 'tis the wish of his heart to extirpate them?"

The colonel's business concluded, St. Austyn would have bade him farewell, but the veteran replied—"No, no, as you have conferred so many favours on me to-night, you may as well conclude as you have begun. Give me your arm home; for, to confess the truth, my head is not perfectly easy, and the motion of a carriage increases it. I do not therefore think I shall set off home tomorrow, so shall be glad if you will give me a call: entrust me with what letters you think fit, and I warrant I'll give you a good account of them in a short time."

As the colonel complained of his head, Frederic pressed him to call at a surgeon's, which he at length complied with; but no outward wound appearing, quiet for a few days and a regular diet were declared the only requisites.

When they had nearly reached Mrs. Mosely's, St. Austyn, loosing the colonel's arm,

arm, said—"My services, if they merit that name, can no longer be useful; I therefore will wish you a good-night, and will do myself the honour of sending to inquire after your health to-morrow, and also to trouble you with a letter to Gertrude."

"I desire," replied the colonel, "that instead of doing yourself the honour to send after me, you will do me the honour to call yourself; your letters appear such uncertain things, that, unless you deliver them into my own hand, I will not answer for their safety."

"I would willingly avail myself of your invitation," said Frederic, "but—"

"But me no buts," interrupted the colonel; "I am resolved to be your friend, and insist on being treated as such."

St. Austyn bowed—"I accept the offer with thanks," said he; "and to shew you that my candour at least merits the distinction, confess, that as necessity has made me relinquish all thoughts of Miss Montgomery

gomery for ever, I will not court the pain even a transitory sight of her would occasion. May she be happy! while I——".

"Pshaw, pshaw!" interrupted the colonel, "she shall know nothing of the matter until we get into the country. I'll send Dame Mosely and her upon some errand or other, that shall detain them from eleven till two; so I desire you will come in the interim."

St. Austyn, thus pressed, promised; and having seen the veteran enter, walked to his town-house, the time for which it had been engaged wanting yet a fortnight of being expired.

CHAPTER XX.

Self-accusation—An old Acquaintance.

THE confusion of Frederic's mind was too great to be immediately arranged; and on his arrival at home, throwing himself into a chair, he remained a considerable time lost in the reflection of what had passed. At length starting up, and pacing the apartment with hasty steps, he exclaimed—"Oh, Berners, into what an abyss hast thou plunged me! Yet why do I accuse Berners? Did not nature bestow on me a portion of reason sufficient to render me an agent for myself? Berners acted according to his natural propensities—why did I not do the same? I had then been happy. As it is, I merit all I suffer; I have

have erred against reason and conscience, and am—what I have made myself."

After a considerable pause he continued—"How could I for even a moment suppose her guilty, when every look, action, and word, proclaimed that hers was not a heart to be purchased? Her brother too—let me shrink from the comparison—he is truly a man of honour, while I——"

A loud rap at the street-door broke on his reflections, and a moment after Berners entered, for he had not as yet quitted St. Austyn's, and, surprised to see Frederic, exclaimed—

"Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damned,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee——"

"I cannot boast," returned St. Austyn, receiving Berners' offered hand, "of being a spirit of peace: but my *intents* are certainly charitable; for I had the good fortune to render a trifling service to an old gentleman

gentleman who was thrown from his horse, and requested me to accompany him to town, or I should not have seen you this evening."

"Do you call that charitable?" said Berners. "If he be affluent, 'tis ten to one if his heirs be of the same opinion. By the way, I was in hopes your fit of the spleen was past, and that you were come to join me."

St. Austyn waved the discourse (for he had no inclination to enter into particulars), and asked Berners questions respecting his new profession; all which being resolved, he pleaded fatigue, and retired to his apartment.

Strange as the paradox may appear, his heart was at once relieved, and its oppression increased. He had heard from undeniable evidence, that Mrs. Stanhope and his sister yet loved him. Marian too was cleared of the opprobrium that had almost driven him to distraction; yet to counterbalance those advantages, he considered

sidered his fortune (at least for a considerable time) totally involved; if that had not been the case, what might he not have hoped, in his present frame of mind, from Mrs. Stanhope's kindness and the colonel's friendship? But, as it was, the bar between Marian and himself appeared more insuperable than ever. A thought crossed his mind for a moment, of throwing himself on Mrs. Stanhope's affection, to whom he knew his difficulties in money transactions would be accounted as trifles; but the idea was banished as soon as formed. —"Perish the thought," said he, "and sooner myself than have recourse to her generosity! If I have expended my fortune like a fool, at least let me endeavour to bear the reverse like a man. With these thoughts he retired to bed, but the occurrences of the evening prevented sleep. Yet it was not the restless anxiety that had before possessed him; a gleam of self-satisfaction sweetened its bitterness—he was more content with himself. Though his

his fortune was involved, his debts were paid. That his obligations to Berners, as he supposed them, were in some measure acknowledged, likewise gave him pleasure; and though he had no longer money for riot and dissipation, yet he should have enough for peace and retirement. In short, no sacrifice he had made would have cost him a sigh, had not the remembrance of Marian mingled with it. But strengthening his mind with every consideration he could devise, he at length fell asleep.

Rising at an early hour, he had breakfasted, written to Gertrude, and was gone out, before Berners left his apartment; but as he was as yet too early for his appointment with the colonel, he walked until past eleven, when, with an agitated mind, he took the way to Duke-street.

On entering the house, the colonel's servant informed him that his master was not up, being confined from the head-ache, but had desired, if he called, that he would have the goodness to wait.

 Frederic

Frederic acquiesced, and was shewn into a parlour, where he had been seated but a few minutes when the door opened, and Miss Southern entered, being unapprised any one was there. The surprise was mutual, but St. Austyn rising, said—"Miss Southern, I rejoice to see you; frequently have I thought of you, but could learn no tidings where you were retired since your mother's death. That unhappy event I was informed of when I called at Knightsbridge one morning to pay my compliments to her. Perhaps," said he, smiling, "you are married, and have forgotten, or not thought fit, to claim the promise I made on leaving your house?"

"Ah, sir!" replied Betsey, bursting into tears, "I shall never forget it, though I shall never claim it. My obligations to you I sensibly feel. You saw my danger, and wished to warn me of it; but I was not to be so fortunate; I was doomed to plunge myself in guilt, shame, and sorrow, and my mother into an untimely grave."

St. Austyn looked astonished; a suspicion that Berners might have seduced her intruded on his mind; and approaching her, he said—"My dear Miss Southern, pardon me; indeed I sincerely wish you well. Surely my friend Berners——"

"Ah, sir!" interrupted she, "do not call such a villain your friend; friendship cannot subsist between such contrary characters; you, I know, are generous and humane, and would, if possible, have saved me. I am almost convinced you left my mother's house on purpose to break off the correspondence between Mr. Berners and me; but it was unavailing—he was too complete a libertine to let me escape."

"You speak with an acrimony that in no other case could be excused," returned Frederic; "the injury is great, and not to be compensated; yet in regard to pecuniary matters, I will take care he shall do you justice."

"Do me justice!" said Betsey: "'Tis not in his nature either to speak truth,

or do justice; sooner would I perish, than receive any thing at his hands. If he is inclined to do justice, let him unsay all he has said of your lovely sister—let him confess the forgery he shewed me—let him——"

"Merciful Heaven! Miss Southern, let me entreat you to have patience. Your wrongs may indeed be great, but do not let them make *you* lose sight of truth and justice."

"Ah!" said she, "I deserve to be disbelieved; but have you not seen Miss St. Austyn? has she not told you?"

"Told me what?" said Frederic.

"What I related to her, when she was unknown to me. Ah, sir! I only considered her as one of the preservers of my life."

Frederic's curiosity was now completely raised, and by questions he obtained an unconnected account of all that had passed, Betsey never suspecting that the brother of Miss St. Austyn could be included

in

in the prohibition she had received from Montgomery.

The astonishment of Frederic surpassed description: he was almost ready to disbelieve the evidence of his senses; but, with all the composure he could assume, turning to her, he said—"I congratulate you on being placed where you will be out of the reach of temptation. This first error, my dear Miss Southern, may be obliterated; but let it render you cautious. If I can serve you either with my interest or purse, command them freely; but let me entreat that the whole affair be buried in oblivion. As Berners has been so many years my friend, I could wish the business settled without noise. I have seen neither my sister nor aunt, nor yet heard from them, since the period you mention, and the colonel, I am apt to think, knows nothing of the business."

"He only knows my unhappy attempt; the goodness of Mr. Montgomery con-

cealed my shame; he thinks that distress was my only motive."

"Shall I then entreat," said Frederic, "that what has passed this morning may remain unnoticed? It can answer no purpose to say you have disclosed it to me."

"Ah, sir! if Miss Montgomery asks me, I will not deceive her."

"By no means: but, should she not, favour me by remaining silent. The colonel will not even mention to his niece my being here until they return to the country; you are then at liberty."

Betsey had hardly acquiesced and left the room, when the colonel's servant entered to let him know that his master was dressed, and entreated his presence in the drawing-room.

Miss Southern in the meantime was revolving what had passed; she was too little acquainted with the world to foresee what might be expected from the disclosure she had made; but both Montgomery and

and St. Austyn having desired her silence, she concluded they had their particular motives, though without curiosity to pry into them.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Actions of gay Men will not always bear Recapitulation.

THE conversation between the colonel and St. Austyn was far more constrained, on the part of the latter, than the evening before; Berners alone employed all his thoughts, nor yet could he scarcely believe what he had heard. Miss Southern's injuries might lead her to exaggerate; but as to the written promise, if any such thing existed, he could not conceive it forged; nay, a number of till-then-un-

 noticed

noticed circumstances arose in his memory; nor among them did he forget Berners' conduct when he learned, at Mrs. St. Austyn's death, the settlement of Gertrude's fortune. In short, his absence astonished the veteran; but attributing it to a different cause, he endeavoured all he could to raise his spirits, in the expectation of being reconciled to his family, as the whole of Frederic's behaviour convinced him that he earnestly wished it.

"And pray how the plague came *Fine Bones*," at length said he, "to think of the army? I do not like it to be disgraced by such fellows."

"I do not apprehend that he is a coward," replied St. Austyn, not noticing the epithet the colonel had used.

"Perhaps not," said he; "he appears hot-headed, but that is essentially different from courage. However, at all events, as he is a handsome fellow, it is ten to one but a red coat may be of service among the ladies; but I do not like such a character

racter to have the command of honest veterans, who have spent their youth and strength in the service of their country."

Frederic then gave the colonel a letter for Gertrude, which he promised to deliver into her own hand—"Though, by the way," said he, "I believe I shall protract my departure a day longer than I said last night, for my head, though not bad enough to complain of, is yet somewhat troublesome. Marian, however, merely thinks it the headache; but on our reaching home I shall confess the whole."

"If you do not go to-morrow, I may perhaps trouble you with a few lines more," said Frederic.

"Well, do so; I will dispose of the women as I have done this morning."

"Indeed," said Frederic, "I cannot think of debarring you of so much more pleasant company."

"A truce with your compliment!" replied the colonel. "I earnestly wish to see you

you in friendship with your aunt, and would strain almost any point to accomplish my purpose. Your separation from Berners will be a gigantic step, and indeed the only efficacious one towards regaining her entire confidence."

St. Austyn having delivered his letter, was impatient to be gone, and, as soon as politeness would permit, left the colonel, who, however, insisted on his calling the ensuing morning, which Frederic at length promised, unless something very material prevented it.

Berners was out on Frederic's return home, nor was he displeased to find him so, as he truly judged that the moment of passion was an improper one to enter into explanations of the past. That Berners was a libertine, a gamester, and, in the strongest sense of the word, a free liver, he well knew; but that with premeditated duplicity he should endeavour to entangle the inexperienced Gertrude, appeared such

a stretch

a stretch of unpardonable villany, as at once struck at the root of friendship. As there was no probability of Berners coming home till late, St. Austyn sent his servant to several places where he was likely to be met with, but in vain; and towards evening, finding it unavailing to wait, he called on his solicitor, and having transacted some business, returned at an early hour.

Berners in the meantime had heard of St. Austyn's inquiries for him, and, far from suspecting the cause, hastened home.

On his entrance Frederic gave him no time to speak, for starting from his seat, he exclaimed—"Berners, I am rejoiced you are come; my impatience has been beyond all bounds; either you have been grossly misrepresented to me, or I am at once the greatest dupe and the most ill-used man on earth."

Berners was taken unawares; and though blushes had long been strangers to his cheeks, yet his conscience was not so completely

pletely seared but a crimson hue dyed his face.

"Misrepresented!" repeated he, after a momentary pause; "pray who may it be that takes such liberties with me? The obligation shall not go unrequited."

"Anger," replied Frederic, "in this case will be of no avail; my informer is a woman—Betsey Southern!"

As he spoke he fixed his eyes strongly on Berners, who involuntarily gave a start. —"Betsey Southern!" said he: "that surely is impossible; she it *could* not be; I have undeniable reasons to suppose her dead."

"You were at least private in that circumstance," returned Frederic; "for I believe you have frequently replied to my inquiries respecting her, that you were ignorant of her situation."

"I might not choose to reply to questions that did not immediately concern you," returned Berners, warmly; "nor do I now. If I liked the girl, and that liking was

was returned, what concern have you, or any one, in the business?"

"No concern but that which every one who bears a human form ought to feel at the seduction of an unsuspecting, unprotected female. *My* business, indeed, is to me of a nearer nature; and as a man, and as you value your honour, I charge you answer it. You will observe, Berners, I am calm—be therefore equally so. I confess, though I think I have strong presumptive proof, yet I unwillingly believe it. Have you, or have you not, received any promise of marriage from Gertrude?"

"Supposing that information just," said Berners, "what injury have you sustained from it?"

"What injury! Is it possible you can ask that question? To persuade a young inexperienced girl to take a step of such consequence without the knowledge of her nearest relations—does that answer *your* idea of honour, or *your* sentiments of friendship, to conceal it from me? Gertrude,

trude, at the age of seventeen, however unpardonable, was unequal to the art of a libertine of twenty-nine. It however can now, thanks to my mother's will! be of no avail; you will therefore favour me by relinquishing it."

"Never!" replied Berners. "Though the power of Mrs. Stanhope may force her to falsify those promises, yet I will preserve that pledge at least of her affection."

"To shew to the next victim you mean to seduce, as an engagement you cannot break," exclaimed St. Austyn, losing his temper. "At length the mask is torn off, and I see you, as those that knew the world better than myself, predicted. Could you ever dare to suppose, infatuated as I was, that I would willingly consent to my sister's espousing the refuse of half the prostitutes in town? I might be fool enough to expend my fortune, and injure my health, in pursuits my calmer moments despised; but I never was scoundrel enough to consent to the ruin of a sister. There, Berners,

Berners, you left my education unfinished—that refinement on villany was overlooked."

"This language shall be properly answered," said Berners.

"Call me fool, dupe, idiot, and I will acknowledge all," returned Frederic; "be you equally just, and confess how truly you merit those of knave, villain, deceiver, and hypocrite."

"Whatever I have done I dare justify," said Berners; "I am ready to give you satisfaction this moment."

"Satisfaction!" repeated Frederic; "what satisfaction can be made for exposing the folly of an inexperienced girl? What satisfaction can you make to the feelings of a man you have so grossly injured, under the detestable pretence of friendship? A short time back, but for the levity of your character, I should have gloried to call you brother, and I at least owe Heaven thanks that you were not hypocrite enough to conceal it."

"Name

"Name your time and place for to-morrow," replied Berners.

"Primrose Hill, at six. That spot has once witnessed my dishonour—to-morrow it shall see me punish a villain, or perish in the attempt."

With those words he quitted the apartment, leaving Berners in no very enviable state of mind. In a few minutes after he desired the servant to call him a coach, and left the house.

Late as it was, Frederic went in pursuit of captain Watson, who had before attended him in the meeting with Montgomery, and obtained his promise to accompany him, though greatly astonished when he learned that Berners was his adversary. Watson, though rather what the world calls a man of pleasure, was strictly a man of honour; he belonged to the same regiment in which St. Austyn had purchased for Berners, and being brother to the agent, had learned some particulars respecting the business, that gave him a high

high opinion of Frederic. He therefore lost no time when St. Austyn left him, but with a brother-officer set off in quest of Berners, whom at length he found at a gaming-house he usually frequented late in the evening. Calling him out, he apprised him of what had passed, and of the promise he had given; but at the same time observed, that if he could settle the dispute more amicably, he should be happy.

"I have very strong reasons to know your situation was procured by his interest," said he; "which is a proof of uncommon friendship and generosity in the present state of his finances; for, ample as his fortune was, it is said to be nearly ruined; I have heard a sale is to take place of all his horses and carriages. The quarrel he touched slightly upon, but enough to convince me that you have not acted in this case in a manner that any gentleman will countenance. You are young in the army, Mr. Berners; but, believe me, raising your arm against the man who has been

been sincerely your friend, will not enhance your character for courage, but rather give it a stigma of ingratitude, which will make you universally shunned."

"My obligations to St. Austyn are void, when he takes so much pains to publish them; nor will I be indebted to him for my situation," replied Berners.

"St. Austyn never mentioned them," answered he; "my information was obtained through my brother, who transacted the whole business; and as for your situation, I think with yourself, that obligation ought to be cancelled before you meet him."

"It is impossible to cancel it before the morning," returned Berners; "you will therefore excuse my entering on the subject. I shall see you at six."

END OF VOL. II.

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